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THE GIFT OF

Miss Beatrice Castle.

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THE GIFT OF

Miss Beatrice Castle.

The Writings of

"FIONA MACLEOD"

UNIFORM EDITION

ARRANGED BY

MRS. WILLIAM SHARP

William Sharp

Poems
and
Dramas

BY

"FIONA MACLEOD"

(WILLIAM SHARP)

NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY
1914

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FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM

THRENODIES, SONGS AND OTHER POEMS

"The great winding sheets that bury all things in oblivion, are two: Love, that makes oblivious of Life; and Death, that obliterates Love."

"Was it because I desired thee darkly, that thou could'st not know the white spell? Or was it that the white spell could not reach thy darkness? One god debateth this: and another god answereth this: but one god knoweth it. With him be the issue."

AN LEABHAR BÀN.
(*The Book of White Magic.*)

"My wisdom became pregnant on lonely mountains; upon rugged stones she bore her young.

"Now she runneth strangely through the hard desert and seeketh, and ever seeketh for soft grass, mine own old wisdom."

NIETZSCHE.

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POEMS

FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM

". . . . . I would not find;
For when I find, I know
I shall have claspt the wandering wind
And built a house of snow."

FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM

Across the silent stream
  Where the slumber-shadows go,
From the dim blue Hills of Dream
  I have heard the west wind blow.

Who hath seen that fragrant land,
  Who hath seen that unscanned west?
Only the listless hand
  And the unpulsing breast.

But when the west wind blows
  I see moon-lances gleam
Where the Host of Faerie flows
  Athwart the Hills of Dream.

And a strange song I have heard
  By a shadowy stream,
And the singing of a snow-white bird
  On the Hills of Dream.

WHITE STAR OF TIME

Each love-thought in thy mind doth rise
  As some white cloud at even,
Till in sweet dews it falls on me
  Athirst for thee, my Heaven!

My Heaven, my Heaven, thou art so far!
  Stoop, since I cannot climb:
I would this wandering fire were lost
  In thee, white Star of Time!

EILIDH[1] MY FAWN

Far away upon the hills at the lighting of the dawn
I saw a stirring in the fern and out there leapt a fawn:
And O my heart was up at that and like the wind it blew
Till its shadow hovered o'er the fawn as 'mid the fern it flew.

And Eilidh! Eilidh! Eilidh! was the wind song on the hill,
And Eilidh! Eilidh! Eilidh! did the echoing corries fill:
My hunting heart was glad indeed, at the lighting of the dawn,
For O it was the hunting then of my bonnie, bonnie Fawn!

[1] Pronounced *Eily.*

THY DARK EYES TO MINE

Thy dark eyes to mine, Eilidh,
  Lamps of desire!
O how my soul leaps
  Leaps to their fire!

Sure, now, if I in heaven,
  Dreaming in bliss,
Heard but a whisper,
But the lost echo even
  Of one such kiss—

All of the Soul of me
  Would leap afar—
If that called me to thee,
Aye, I would leap afar
  A falling star!

GREEN BRANCHES

Wave, wave, green branches, wave me far
away
To where the forest deepens and the hill-
winds, sleeping, stay:
Where Peace doth fold her twilight wings, and
through the heart of day
There goes the rumour of passing hours grown
faint and grey.

Wave, wave, green branches, my heart like a
bird doth hover
Above the nesting-place your green-gloom
shadows cover:
O come to my nesting heart, come close, come
close, bend over,
Joy of my heart, my life, my prince, my lover!

LORD OF MY LIFE

He laid his dear face next to mine,
His eyes aflame burned close to mine,
His heart to mine, his lips to mine,
O he was mine, all mine, all mine.

Drunk with old wine of love I was,
Drunk as the wild bee in the grass:
Yea, as the wild bee in the grass,
Drunk, drunk, with wine of love I was!

His lips of life to me were fief,
Beneath him I was but a leaf
Blown by the wind, a shaken leaf,
Yea, as the sickle reaps the sheaf,
My Grief!
He reaped me as a gathered sheaf!

His to be gathered, his the bliss,
But not a greater bliss than this!
All of the empty world to miss
For wild redemption of his kiss!
My Grief!

Lord of my Life

For hell was lost, though heaven was brief
Sphered in the universe of thy kiss—
So cries to thee thy fallen leaf,
Thy gathered sheaf,
Lord of my life, my Pride, my Chief,
My Grief!

THE LONELY HUNTER

Green branches, green branches, I see you beckon; I follow!
Sweet is the place you guard, there in the rowan-tree hollow.
There he lies in the darkness, under the frail white flowers,
Heedless at last, in the silence, of these sweet midsummer hours.

But sweeter, it may be, the moss whereon he is sleeping now,
And sweeter the fragrant flowers that may crown his moon-white brow:
And sweeter the shady place deep in an Eden hollow
Wherein he dreams I am with him — and, dreaming, whispers, "Follow!"

Green wind from the green-gold branches, what is the song you bring?
What are all songs for me, now, who no more care to sing?

The Lonely Hunter

Deep in the heart of Summer, sweet is life to
me still,
But my heart is a lonely hunter that hunts on
a lonely hill.

Green is that hill and lonely, set far in a
shadowy place;
White is the hunter's quarry, a lost-loved hu-
man face:
O hunting heart, shall you find it, with arrow
of failing breath,
Led o'er a green hill lonely by the shadowy
hound of Death?

Green branches, green branches, you sing of
a sorrow olden,
But now it is midsummer weather, earth-
young, sunripe, golden:
Here I stand and I wait, here in the rowan-
tree hollow,
But never a green leaf whispers, "Follow, oh,
Follow, Follow!"

O never a green leaf whispers, where the
green-gold branches swing:
O never a song I hear now, where one was
wont to sing
Here in the heart of Summer, sweet is life to
me still,
But my heart is a lonely hunter that hunts on
a lonely hill.

COR CORDIUM

Sweet Heart, true heart, strong heart, star of my life, oh, never
For thee the lowered banner, the lost endeavour!
The weapons are still unforged that thee and me shall dissever,
For I in thy heart have dwelling, and thou hast in mine for ever.

Can a silken cord strangle love, or a steel sword sever?
Or be as a bruisèd reed, the flow'r of joy for ever?
Love is a beautiful dream, a deathless endeavour,
And for thee the lowered banner, O Sweet Heart never!

THE ROSE OF FLAME

Oh, fair immaculate rose of the world, rose
of my dream, my Rose!
Beyond the ultimate gates of dream I have
heard thy mystical call:
It is where the rainbow of hope suspends and
the river of rapture flows—
And the cool sweet dews from the wells of
peace for ever fall.

And all my heart is aflame because of the rapture and peace,
And I dream, in my waking dreams and deep
in the dreams of sleep,
Till the high sweet wonderful call that shall
be the call of release
Shall ring in my ears as I sink from gulf to
gulf and from deep to deep——

Sink deep, sink deep beyond the ultimate
dreams of all desire—
Beyond the uttermost limit of all that the craving spirit knows:

Then, then, oh then I shall be as the inner
flame of thy fire,
O fair immaculate rose of the world, Rose of
my dream, my Rose!

ISLA

Isla, Isla, heart of my heart, it is you alone I
am loving—
Pulse my life, my flame, my joy, love is a
bitter thing!
Love has its killing pain, they say—and you
alone I am loving—
Isla, Isla, my pride, my king, love is a bitter
thing!

Isla, Isla, in the underworld where the elfin
music is,
There we shall meet one day at last, as the
wave with the wind o' the south!
Then you shall cry, " My Dream, my Queen! "
and crown me with your kiss,
And I to my Kingdom come, my king, my
mouth to thy mouth!

AN IMMORTAL

"For a mortal love an Immortal may be shapen."

Child of no mortal birth, that yet doth live,
Where loiterest thou, O blossom of our joy?
Unsummon'd hence, dost thou, knowing all, forgive?
Thy rainbow-rapture, doth it never cloy?
O exquisite dream, dear child of our desire,
On mounting wings flitt'st thou afar from here?
We cannot reach thee who dost never tire,
Sweet phantom of delight, appear, appear!
How lovely thou must be, wrought in strange fashion
From out the very breath and soul of passion . . .
With eyes as proud as his, my lover, thy sire,
When seeking through the twilight of my hair
He finds the suddenly secret flame deep hidden there.
Twin torches flashing into fire.

THE VISION

In a fair place
Of whin and grass,
I heard feet pass
Where no one was.

I saw a face
Bloom like a flower—
Nay, as the rain-bow shower
Of a tempestuous hour.

It was not man, nor woman:
It was not human:
But, beautiful and wild
Terribly undefiled,
I knew an unborn child.

PULSE OF MY HEART

Are these your eyes, Isla,
  That look into mine?
Is this smile, this laugh,
  Thine?

Heart of me, dear,
  O pulse of my heart,
This is our child, our child—
  And . . . we apart!

Wrought of thy life, Isla,
  Wrought in my womb,
Never to feel thy kiss!—
  Ah, bitter doom.

Hush, hush: within thine eyes
  His eyes I see . . .
Soft as a bird's sighs
Thy breathings rise! . . .
  If there be Paradise
  For him and me
    (Who hold it but a dream
    Because of bitter fate)
The first supernal gleam

Beyond the flame-swept gate
Shall be thine eyes when thou drawest near—
None other shall it be
Who his lost hands, with mine, and thine
In love refound, shall intertwine . . .
But now, alas, alas, we are far apart,
My baby dear,
Pulse of my Heart!

MO-LENNAV-A-CHREE

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, dear to me, dear and sweet,
In dreams I am hearing the sound of your little running feet—
The sound of your running feet that like the sea-hoofs beat
A music by day an' night, Eilidh, on the sands of my heart, my Sweet!

Eilidh, blue i' the eyes, flower-sweet as children are,
And white as the canna that blows with the hill-breast wind afar,
Whose is the light in thine eyes—the light of a star?—a star
That sitteth supreme where the starry lights of heaven a glory are!

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, put off your wee hands from the heart o' me,
It is pain they are making there, where no more pain should be:

For little running feet, an' wee white hands,
an' croodlin' as of the sea,
Bring tears to my eyes, Eilidh, tears, tears, out
of the heart o' me—
Mo-lennav-a-chree,
Mo-lennav-a-chree!

HUSHING SONG

Eilidh, Eilidh,
My bonny wee lass:
The winds blow,
And the hours pass.

But never a wind
Can do thee wrong,
Brown Birdeen, singing
Thy bird-heart song.

And never an hour
But has for thee
Blue of the heaven
And green of the sea:

Blue for the hope of thee,
Eilidh, Eilidh;
Green for the joy of thee,
Eilidh, Eilidh.

Swing in thy nest, then,
Here on my heart,
Birdeen, Birdeen,
Here on my heart,
Here on my heart!

MY BIRDEEN

On bonnie birdeen,
  Sweet-bird of my heart—
Tell me, my dear one,
  How shall we part?

He calls me, he cries
  Who is father to thee:
O birdeen, his eyes
  In these blue eyes I see.

Thou art wrought of our love,
  Of our joy that was slain:
My birdeen, my dove,
  My passion, my pain.

LULLABY

Lennavan-mo,
Lennavan-mo,
Who is it swinging you to and fro,
With a long low swing and a sweet low croon,
And the loving words of the mother's rune?

Lennavan-mo,
Lennavan-mo,
Who is it swinging you to and fro?
I am thinking it is an angel fair,
The Angel that looks on the gulf from the lowest stair
And swings the green world upward by its leagues of sunshine hair.

Lennavan-mo,
Lennavan-mo,
Who swingeth you and the Angel to and fro?
It is He whose faintest thought is a world afar,
It is He whose wish is a leaping seven-moon'd star,
It is He, Lennavan-mo,
To whom you and I and all things flow.

Lullaby

Lennavan-mo,
Lennavan-mo,
It is only a little wee lass you are, Eilidh-mo-chree,
But as this wee blossom has roots in the depths of the sky,
So you are at one with the Lord of Eternity—
Bonnie wee lass that you are,
My morning-star,
Eilidh-mo-chree, Lennavan-mo,
Lennavan-mo.

THE BUGLES OF DREAMLAND

Swiftly the dews of the gloaming are falling:
Faintly the bugles of Dreamland are calling.
O hearken, my darling, the elf-flutes are blowing
The shining-eyed folk from the hillside are flowing,
I' the moonshine the wild-apple blossoms are snowing,
And louder and louder where the white dews are falling
The far-away bugles of Dreamland are calling.

O what are the bugles of Dreamland calling
There where the dews of the gloaming are falling?
Come away from the weary old world of tears,
Come away, come away to where one never hears
The slow weary drip of the slow weary years,

But peace and deep rest till the white dews
are falling
And the blithe bugle-laughters through
Dreamland are calling.

Then bugle for us, where the cool dews are
falling,
O bugle for us, wild elf-flutes now calling—
For Heart's-love and I are too weary to wait
For the dim drowsy whisper that cometh
too late,
The dim muffled whisper of blind empty
fate—
O the world's well lost now the dream-dews
are falling,
And the bugles of Dreamland about us are
calling.

MORAG OF THE GLEN

When Morag of the Glen was fëy
They took her where the Green Folk stray:
And there they left her, night and day,
A day and night they left her, fëy.

And when they brought her home again,
Aye of the Green Folk was she fain:
They brought her leannan, Roy M'Lean,
She looked at him with proud disdain.

For I have killed a man, she said,
A better man than you to wed:
I slew him when he clasped my head.
And now he sleepeth with the dead.

And did you see that little wren?
My sister dear it was flew, then!
That skull her home, that eye her den,
Her song is *Morag o' the Glen!*

For when she went I did not go,
But washed my hands in blood-red woe;
O wren, trill out your sweet song's flow
Morag is white as the driven snow!

THE HILLS OF RUEL

" Over the hills and far away "—
That is the tune I heard one day,
When heather-drowsy I lay and listened
And watched where the stealthy sea-tide glistened.

Beside me there on the Hills of Ruel
An old man stooped and gathered fuel—
And I asked him this: if his son were dead,
As the folk in Glendaruel all said,
How could he still believe that never
Duncan had crossed the shadowy river.

Forth from his breast the old man drew
A lute that once on a rowan-tree grew:
And, speaking no words, began to play
" Over the hills and far away."

" But how do you know," I said, thereafter,
" That Duncan has heard the fairy laughter?
How do you know he has followed the cruel
Honey-sweet folk of the Hills of Ruel? "

" How do I know? " the old man said,
" Sure I know well my boy's not dead:
For late on the morrow they hid him, there
Where the black earth moistens his yellow hair,
I saw him alow on the moor close by,
I watched him low on the hillside lie,
An' I heard him laughin' wild up there,
An' talk, talk, talkin' beneath his hair—
For down o'er his face his long hair lay
But I saw it was cold and ashy grey.

'Aye, laughin' and talkin' wild he was,
'An' that to a Shadow out on the grass,
'A Shadow that made my blood go chill,
For never its like have I seen on the hill.
'An' the moon came up, and the stars grew white,
'An' the hills grew black in the bloom o' the night,
'An' I watched till the death-star sank in the moon
And the moonmaid fled with her flittermice shoon,
Then the Shadow that lay on the moorside there
Rose up and shook its wildmoss hair,
And Duncan he laughed no more, but grey
As the rainy dust of a rainy day,
Went over the hills and far away."

The Hills of Ruel

" Over the hills and far away "
That is the tune I heard one day.
O that I too might hear the cruel
Honey-sweet folk of the Hills of Ruel.

SHEILING SONG

I go where the sheep go,
With the sheep are my feet:
I go where the kye go,
Their breath is so sweet:

O lover who loves me,
Art thou half so fleet?
Where the sheep climb, the kye go,
There shall we meet!

THE BANDRUIDH[1]

My robe is of green,
  My crown is of stars—
The grass is the green
  And the daisies the stars:
O'er lochan and streamlet
  My breath moveth sweet . . .
Bonnie blue lochans,
  Hillwaters fleet.

The song in my heart
  Is the song of the birds,
And the wind in my heart
  Is the lowing of herds:
The light in my eyes,
  And the breath of my mouth,
Are the clouds of spring-skies
  And the sound of the South.

(The Airs of Spring)

Grass-green from thy mouth
The sweet sound of the South!

[1] The Bandruidh—lit. the Druidess, *i. e.* the Sorceress: poetically, the Green Lady, *i.e.* Spring.

THE MOON-CHILD

A little lonely child am I
  That have not any soul:
God made me as the homeless wave,
  That has no goal.

A seal my father was, a seal
  That once was man:
My mother loved him tho' he was
  'Neath mortal ban.

He took a wave and drownëd her,
  She took a wave and lifted him:
And I was born where shadows are
  In sea-depths dim.

All through the sunny blue-sweet hours
  I swim and glide in waters green:
Never by day the mournful shores
  By me are seen.

But when the gloom is on the wave
  A shell unto the shore I bring:
And then upon the rocks I sit
  And plaintive sing.

The Moon-Child

I have no playmate but the tide
  The seaweed loves with dark brown eyes:
The night-waves have the stars for play,
  For me but sighs.

THE RUNE OF THE FOUR WINDS

By the Voice in the corries
When the Polestar danceth:

By the Voice on the summits
The dead feet know:

By the soft wet cry
When the Heat-star troubleth:

By the plaining and moaning
Of the Sigh of the Rainbows:

By the four white winds of the world,
Whose father the golden Sun is,
Whose mother the wheeling Moon is,
The North and the South and the East and the West:
By the four good winds of the world,
That Man knoweth,
That One dreadeth,
That God blesseth—

Be all well
On mountain and moorland and lea,
On loch-face and lochan and river,
On shore and shallow and sea!

The Rune of the Four Winds

By the Voice of the Hollow
Where the worm dwelleth:

By the Voice of the Hollow
Where the sea-wave stirs not:

By the Voice of the Hollow
That sun hath not seen yet:

By the three dark winds of the world;
The chill dull breath of the Grave,
The breath from the depths of the Sea,
The breath of To-morrow:
By the white and dark winds of the world,
The four and the three that are seven,
That Man knoweth,
That One dreadeth,
That God blesseth—

Be all well
  On mountain and moorland and lea,
On loch-face and lochan and river,
  On shore and shallow and sea!

DREAM FANTASY

"If Death Sleep's brother be,
And souls bereft of sense have so sweet dreams,
How could I wish thus still to dream and die!"
(*Madrigal*)
WILLIAM DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.

There is a land of Dream;
I have trodden its golden ways:
I have seen its amber light
From the heart of its sun-swept days;
I have seen its moonshine white
On its silent waters gleam—
Ah, the strange sweet lonely delight
Of the Valleys of Dream.

Ah, in that Land of Dream,
The mystical moon-white land,
Comes from what unknown sea—
Adream on what unknown strand—
A sound as of feet that flee,
As of multitudes that stream
From the shores of that shadowy sea
Through the Valleys of Dream.

Dream Fantasy

It is dark in the Land of Dream.
There is silence in all the Land.
Are the dead all gathered there—
In havens, by no breath fanned?
This stir i' the dawn, this chill wan air—
This faint dim yellow of morning-gleam—
O is this sleep, or waking where
    Lie hush'd the Valleys of Dream?

MATER CONSOLATRIX

Heart's-joy must fade . . . though it borrow
  Heaven's azure for its clay:
But the Joy that is one with Sorrow,
  Treads an immortal way:
For each, is born To-morrow,
  For each, is Yesterday.

Joy that is clothed with shadow
  Shall arise from the dead:
But Joy that is clothed with the rainbow
  Shall with the bow be sped: . . .
Where the Sun spends his fires is she,
  And where the Stars are led.

CLOSING DOORS

CLOSING DOORS

O sands of my heart, what wind moans low
along thy shadowy shore?
Is that the deep sea-heart I hear with the dying
sob at its core?
Each dim lost wave that lapses is like a clos-
ing door:
'Tis closing doors they hear at last who soon
shall hear no more,
Who soon shall hear no more.

Eilidh, Eilidh, Eilidh, call low, come back, call
low to me:
My heart you have broken, your troth for-
saken, but love even yet can be:
Come near, call low, for closing doors are as
the waves o' the sea,
Once closed they are closed for ever, Eilidh,
lost, lost, for thee and me,
Lost, lost, for thee and me.

AT THE LAST

She cometh no more:
Time, too, is dead.
The last tide is led
From the last shore.
Eternity . . .
What is Eternity?
But the sea coming,
The sea going,
For evermore.

IN THE SHADOW

O she will have the deep dark heart, for all
her face is fair;
As deep and dark as though beneath the
shadow of her hair:
For in her hair a spirit dwells that no white
spirit is,
And hell is in the hopeless heaven of that lost
spirit's kiss.

She has two men within the palm, the hollow
of her hand:
She takes their souls and blows them forth
as idle drifted sand:
And one falls back upon her breast that is his
quiet home,
And one goes out into the night and is as
wind-blown foam.

And when she sees the sleep of one, ofttimes
she rises there
And looks into the outer dark and calleth soft
and fair:

And then the lost soul that afar within the dark doth roam
Comes laughing, laughing, laughing, and crying, Home! Home!

There is no home in faithless love, O fool that deems her fair:
Bitter and drear that home you seek, the name of it, Despair:
Drown, drown beneath the sterile kiss of the engulfing wave,
A heaven of peace it is beside this mockery of a grave.

THE STAR OF BEAUTY

It dwells not in the skies,
My Star of Beauty!
'Twas made of her sighs,
Her tears and agonies,
The fire in her eyes,
My Star of Beauty!

Lovely and delicate,
My Star of Beauty!
How could she master Fate,
Although she gave back hate
Great as my love was great,
My Star of Beauty!

I loved, she hated, well:
My Star of Beauty!
Soon, soon the passing bell:
She rose, and I fell:
Soft shines in deeps of hell
My Star of Beauty!

AN OLD TALE OF THREE

Ah, bonnie darling, lift your dark eyes dreaming!
See, the firelight fills the gloaming, though deep darkness grows without—

[Hush, dear, hush, I hear the sea-birds screaming,
And down beyond the haven the tide comes with a shout!]

Ah, birdeen, sweetheart, sure he is not coming,
He who has your hand in his, while I have all your heart—

[Hush, dear, hush, I hear the wild bees humming
Far away in the underworld where true love shall not part!]

Darling, darling, darling, all the world is singing,
Singing, singing, singing a song of joy for me!

[Hush, dear, hush, what wild sea-wind is bringing
Gloom o' the sea about thy brow, athwart the eyes of thee?]

Ah, heart o' me, darling, darling, all my heart's aflame!
Sure, at the last we are all in all, all in all we two!

At the Door

A Voice

This is the way I take my own, this is the boon I claim!
Sure at the last, ye are all in all, all in all, ye two—

(Later, in the dark, the living brooding beside the dead:—)

Ah, hell of my heart! Ye are dust to me—and dust with dust may woo!

THE BURTHEN OF THE TIDE

The tide was dark an' heavy with the burden
that it bore,
I heard it talkin', whisperin', upon the weedy
shore:
Each wave that stirred the sea-weed was like
a closing door,
'Tis closing doors they hear at last who hear
no more, no more,
My Grief,
No more!

The tide was in the salt sea-weed, and like a
knife it tore,
The hoarse sea-wind went moaning, sooing,
moaning o'er and o'er,
The wild sea-heart was brooding deep upon
its ancient lore,
I heard the sob, the sooing sob, the dying sob
at its core,
My Grief,
Its core!

The Burthen of the Tide

The white sea-waves were wan and grey its
ashy lips before;
The whirled spume between its jaws in floods
did seaward pour—
O whisperin' weed, O wild sea-waves, O hol-
low baffled roar,
Since one thou hast, O dark dim Sea, why
callest thou for more,
My Grief,
For more.

WHEN THE DEW IS FALLING

When the dew is falling
I have heard a calling
Of aerial sweet voices o'er the low green hill;
And when the noon is dying
I have heard a crying
Where the brown burn slippeth thro' the hollows green and still.

And O the sorrow upon me,
The grey grief upon me,
For a voice that whispered once, and now for aye is still:
O heart forsaken, calling
When the dew is falling,
To the one that comes not ever o'er the low green hill.

THE VOICE AMONG THE DUNES

I have heard the sea-wind sighing
  Where the dune-grasses grow,
The sighing of the dying
  Where the salt tides flow.

For where the salt tides flow
  The sullen dead are lifting
Tired arms, and to and fro
  Are idly drifting.

So through the grey dune-grasses
  Not the wind only cries,
But a dim sea-wrought Shadow
  Breathes drownëd sighs.

THE UNDERSONG

I hear the sea-song of the blood in my heart,
I hear the sea-song of the blood in my ears:
And I am far apart,
And lost in the years.

But when I lie and dream of that which was
Before the first man's shadow flitted on the grass,
I am stricken dumb
With sense of that to come.

Is then this wildering sea-song but a part
Of the old song of the mystery of the years—
Or only the echo of the tired heart
And of tears?

DEAD LOVE

FROM THE GAELIC

(Heard sung by an old woman of the Island of Tiree.)

It is the grey rock I am,
And grey rain on the rock:
It is the grey wave . . .
That grey hound.

What (is it) to be old:
(It is to be as) the grey moss in winter:
Alasdair-mo-ghaol,
It is long since my laughter.

Alasdair-mo-ghaol,
The breast is shrivelled
That you said was white
As canna in wind.

THE SOUL'S ARMAGEDDON

I know not where I go,
O Wind that calls afar:
O Wind that calls for war,
Where the Death-Moon doth glow
In a darkness without star.

Nor do I know the blare
Of the bugles that call:
Nor who rise, nor who fall:
Nor if the torches flare
Where the gods laugh, or crawl.

But I hear, I hear the hum,
The multitudinous cry,
Where myriads fly,
And I hear a voice say, Come:
And the same voice say, Die!

What is the war, O Wind?
Lo, without shield or spear
How can I draw it near?
I am deaf and dumb and blind
With immeasurable fear.

DAY AND NIGHT

From grey of dusk, the veils unfold
To pearl and amethyst and gold—
  Thus is the new day woven and spun:

From glory of blue to rainbow-spray,
From sunset-gold to violet-grey—
  Thus is the restful night re-won.

THE WHITE PEACE

It lies not on the sunlit hill
  Nor on the sunlit plain:
Nor ever on any running stream
  Nor on the unclouded main—

But sometimes, through the Soul of Man,
  Slow moving o'er his pain,
The moonlight of a perfect peace
  Floods heart and brain.

THE LOST STAR

A star was loosed from heaven;
  All saw it fall, in wonder,
Where universe clashed universe
  With solar thunder.

The angels praised God's glory,
  To send this beacon-flare
To show the terror of darkness
  Beneath the Golden Stair.

But God was brooding only
  Upon new births of light;
The star was a drop of water
  On the lips of Eternal Light.

THE RUNE OF AGE

O thou that on the hills and wastes of Night
art Shepherd,
Whose folds are flameless moons and icy
planets,
Whose darkling way is gloomed with ancient
sorrows:
Whose breath lies white as snow upon the
olden,
Whose sigh it is that furrows breasts grown
milkless,
Whose weariness is in the loins of man
And is the barren stillness of the woman:
O thou whom all would flee, and all must
meet,
Thou that the Shadow art of Youth Eter-
nal,
The gloom that is the hush'd air of the
Grave,
The sigh that is between last parted love,
The light for aye withdrawing from weary
eyes,
The tide from stricken hearts for ever
ebbing!

The Rune of Age

O thou the Elder Brother whom none loveth,
Whom all men hail with reverence or mocking,
Who broodest on the brows of frozen summits
Yet dreamest in the eyes of babes and children:
Thou, Shadow of the Heart, the Mind, the Life,
Who art that dusk What-is that is already Has-Been,
To thee this rune of the fathers to the sons
And of the sons to the sons, and mothers to new mothers—
To thee who art Aois,
To thee who art Age!

Breathe thy frosty breath upon my hair, for I am weary!
Lay thy frozen hand upon my bones that they support not,
Put thy chill upon the blood that it sustain not;
Place the crown of thy fulfilling on my forehead;
Throw the silence of thy spirit on my spirit;
Lay the balm and benediction of thy mercy
On the brain-throb and the heart-pulse and the life-spring—
For thy child that bows his head is weary,
For thy child that bows his head is weary.

I the shadow am that seeks the Darkness.
Age, that hath the face of Night unstarr'd
and moonless,
Age, that doth extinguish star and planet,
Moon and sun and all the fiery worlds,
Give me now thy darkness and thy silence!

MIANN

Miann ghaol, Sonas:
Miann bhithe, Sith:
Miann anama, Flathas:
Miann Dhe . . . gile rùn gu brath.

DESIRE

The desire of love, Joy:
The desire of life, Peace:
The desire of the soul, Heaven:
The desire of God . . . a flame-white secret
for ever.

FROM THE HEART OF A WOMAN

THE PRAYER OF WOMEN

O spirit that broods upon the hills
And moves upon the face of the deep,
And is heard in the wind,
Save us from the desire of men's eyes,
And the cruel lust of them.
Save us from the springing of the cruel seed
In that narrow house which is as the grave
For darkness and loneliness . . .
That women carry with them with shame, and
weariness, and long pain,
Only for the laughter of man's heart,
And for the joy that triumphs therein,
And the sport that is in his heart.
Wherewith he mocketh us,
Wherewith he playeth with us,
Wherewith he trampleth upon us . . .
Us, who conceive and bear him;
Us, who bring him forth;
Who feed him in the womb, and at the breast,
and at the knee:
Whom he calleth mother and wife,
And mother again of his children and his
children's children.

Ah, hour of the hours,
When he looks at our hair and sees it is grey;
And at our eyes and sees they are dim;
And at our lips straightened out with long pain;
And at our breasts, fallen and seared as a barren hill;
And at our hands, worn with toil!
Ah, hour of the hours,
When, seeing, he seeth all the bitter ruin and wreck of us—
All save the violated womb that curses him—
All save the heart that forbeareth . . . for pity—
All save the living brain that condemneth him—
All save the spirit that shall not mate with him—
All save the soul he shall never see
Till he be one with it, and equal;
He who hath the bridle, but guideth not;
He who hath the whip, yet is driven;
He who as a shepherd calleth upon us,
But is himself a lost sheep, crying among the hills!
O Spirit, and the Nine Angels who watch us,

And Thou, White Christ, and Mary Mother
of Sorrow,
Heal us of the wrong of man:
We whose breasts are weary with milk,
Cry, cry to Thee, O Compassionate!

THE RUNE OF THE PASSION OF WOMAN

We who love are those who suffer,
We who suffer most are the those who most do love.
O the heartbreak come of longing love,
O the heartbreak come of love deferred,
O the heartbreak come of love grown listless.
Far upon the lonely hills I have heard the crying,
The lamentable crying of the ewes,
And dreamed I heard the sorrow of poor mothers
Made lambless too and weary with that sorrow:
And far upon the waves I have heard the crying,
The lamentable crying of the seamews,
And dreamed I heard the wailing of the women
Whose hearts are flamed with love above the gravestone,
Whose hearts beat fast but hear no fellow-beating.

Bitter, alas, the sorrow of lonely women,
When no man by the ingle sits, and in the cradle
No little flower-like faces flush with slumber:
Bitter the loss of these, the lonely silence,
The void bed, the hearthside void,
The void heart, and only the grave not void:
But bitterer, oh more bitter still, the longing
Of women who have known no love at all, who never,
Never, never, have grown hot and cold with rapture
'Neath the lips or 'neath the clasp of longing,
Who have never opened eyes of heaven to man's devotion,
Who have never heard a husband whisper "wife,"
Who have lost their youth, their dreams, their fairness,
In a vain upgrowing to a light that comes not.
Bitter these: but bitterer than either,
O most bitter for the heart of woman
To have loved and been beloved with passion,
To have known the height and depth, the vision
Of triple-flaming love—and in the heart-self
Sung a song of deathless love, immortal,
Sunrise-haired, and starry-eyed and wondrous:
To have felt the brain sustain the mighty

Weight and reach of thought unspanned and spanless,
To have felt the soul grow large and noble,
To have felt the spirit dauntless, eager, swift in hope and daring,
To have felt the body grow in fairness,
All the glory and the beauty of the body
Thrill with joy of living, feel the bosom
Rise and fall with sudden tides of passion,
Feel the lift of soul to soul, and know the rapture
Of the rising triumph of the ultimate dream
Beyond the pale place of defeated dreams:
To know all this, to feel all this, to be a woman
Crowned with the double crown of lily and rose
And have the morning star to rule the golden hours
And have the evening star thro' hours of dream,
To live, to do, to act, to dream, to hope,
To be a perfect woman with the full
Sweet, wondrous, and consummate joy
Of womanhood fulfilled to all desire—
And then . . . oh then, to know the waning of the vision,
To go through days and nights of starless longing,

Through nights and days of gloom and bitter sorrow:
To see the fairness of the body passing,
To see the beauty wither, the sweet colour
Fade, the coming of the wintry lines
Upon pale faces chilled with idle loving,
The slow subsidence of the tides of living.
To feel all this, and know the desolate sorrow
Of the pale place of all defeated dreams,
And to cry out with aching lips, and vainly;
And to cry out with aching heart, and vainly;
And to cry out with aching brain, and vainly;
And to cry out with aching soul, and vainly;
To cry, cry, cry with passionate heartbreak, sobbing,
To the dim wondrous shape of Love Retreating—
To grope blindly for the warm hand, for the swift touch,
To seek blindly for the starry lamps of passion,
To crave blindly for the dear words of longing!
To go forth cold, and drear, and lonely, O so lonely,
With the heart-cry even as the crying,
The lamentable crying on the hills
When lambless ewes go desolately astray—

Yea, to go forth discrowned at last, who have worn
The flower-sweet lovely crown of rapturous love:
To know the eyes have lost their starry wonder;
To know the hair no more a fragrant dusk
Wherein to whisper secrets of deep longing;
To know the breasts shall henceforth be no haven
For the dear weary head that loved to lie there—
To go, to know, and yet to live and suffer,
To be as use and wont demand, to fly no signal
That the soul founders in a sea of sorrow,
But to be "true," "a woman," "patient," "tender,"
"Divinely acquiescent," all-forbearing,
To laugh, and smile, to comfort, to sustain,
To do all this—oh this is bitterest,
O this the heaviest cross, O this the tree
Whereon the woman hath her crucifixion.

But, O ye women, what avail? Behold,
Men worship at the tree, whereon is writ
The legend of the broken hearts of women.
And this is the end: for young and old the end:

For fair and sweet, for those not sweet nor
fair,
For loved, unloved, and those who once were
loved,
For all the women of all this weary world
Of joy too brief and sorrow far too long,
This is the end: the cross, the bitter tree,
And worship of the phantom raised on high
Out of your love, your passion, your despair,
Hopes unfulfilled, and unavailing tears.

THE RUNE OF THE SORROW OF WOMEN

This is the rune of the women who bear in sorrow:
Who, having anguish of body, die in the pangs of bearing,
Who, with the ebb at the heart, pass ere the wane of the babe-mouth.

The Rune

O we are tired, we are tired, all we who are women:
Heavy the breasts with milk that never shall nourish:
Heavy the womb that never again shall be weighty.
For we have the burthen upon us, we have the burthen,
The long slow pain, the sorrow of going, and the parting.
O little hands, O little lips, farewell and farewell.
Bitter the sorrow of bearing only to end with the parting.

The Dream

Far away in the east of the world a Woman had sorrow.
Heavy she was with child, and the pains were upon her.
And God looked forth out of heaven, and he spake in his pity:
"O Mary, thou bearest the Prince of Peace, and thy seed shall be blessëd."
But Mary the Mother sighed, and God the All-Seeing wondered,
For this is the rune he heard in the heart of Mary the Virgin:—
"Man blindfold soweth the seed, and blindly he reapeth:
And to the word of the Lord is a blessing upon the sower.
O what of the blessing upon the field that is sown,
What of the sown, not of the sower, what of the mother, the bearer?
Sure it is this that I see: that everywhere over the world
The man has the pain and the sorrow, the weary womb and the travail!
Everywhere patient he is, restraining the tears of his patience

Slow in upbraiding, swift in passion unselfish,
Bearing his pain in silence, in silence the shame and the anguish:
Slow, slow he is to put the blame on the love of the woman:
Slow to say she led him astray, swift ever to love and excuse her!
O 'tis a good thing, and I am glad at the seeing,
That man who has all the pain and the patient sorrow and waiting
Keepeth his heart ever young and never upbraideth the woman
For that she laughs in the sun and taketh the joy of her living
And holdeth him to her breast, and knoweth pleasure
And plighteth troth akin to the starry immortals,
And soon forgetteth, and lusteth after another,
And plighteth again, and again, and yet again and again,
And asketh one thing only of man who is patient and loving,—
This: that he swerve not ever, that faithful he be and loyal,
And know that the sorrow of sorrows is only a law of his being,

And all is well with Woman, and the World of Woman, and God.
O 'tis a good thing, and I am glad at the seeing!
And this is the rune of man the bearer of pain and sorrow,
The father who giveth the babe his youth his joy and the life of his living!"

(And high in His Heaven God the All-Seeing troubled.)

The Rune

O we are weary, how weary, all we of the burthen:
Heavy the breasts with milk that never shall nourish:
Heavy the womb that never again shall be fruitful:
Heavy the hearts that never again shall be weighty.
For we have the burthen upon us, we have the burthen,
The long slow pain, and the sorrow of going, and the parting.
O little hands, O little lips, farewell and farewell:

The Rune of the Sorrow of Women

Bitter the sorrow of bearing only to end with
the parting,
Bitter the sorrow of bearing only to end with
the parting.

THE SHEPHERD

"Verily, those herdsmen also were of the sheep!"
NIETZSCHE.

I

He loved me, as he said, in every part,
And yet I could not, would not, give him all:
Why should a woman forfeit her whole heart
At bidding of a single shepherd's call?
One vast the deep, and yet each wave is free
To answer to the moonshine's drowsy smile
Or leap to meet the storm-wind's rapturous glee:
This heart of mine a wave is oftenwhile.
Depth below depth, strange currents cross, re-cross,
The anguished eddies ebb and flow,
But on the placid surface seldom toss
The reckless flotsam of what seeths below:
O placid calms and maelstrom heart of me,
Shall it be thus till there be no more sea?

II

"I am thy shepherd, love, that on this hill
Of life shall tend and guard thee evermore."
These were thy words that far-off day and still
Lives on thine echoing lips this bond of yore.
Yet who wert thou, O soul as I am, thus
To take so blithely gage of shepherding?
Were we not both astray where perilous
Steps might each into the abysmal darkness fling?
Lo, my tired soul even as a storm-stayed ewe
Across the heights unto my shepherd cried:
But to the sheltered vale at last I drew
And laid me weary by the sleeping side.
Thou didst not hear The Shepherd calling us,
Nor far the night wind, vibrant, ominous.

III

O shepherd of mine, lord of my little life,
Guard me from knowledge even of the stress:
And if I stray, take heed thou of thy wife,
Errant from mere woman's wantonness.
Even as the Lord of Hosts, lo, in thy hand,
The hollow of thy hand, my soul support:
Guide this poor derelict back unto the land
And lead me, pilot, to thy sheltering port!

No—no—keep back—away—not now thy kiss:
O shepherd, pilot, wake! awake! awake!
The deep must whelm us both! Hark, the waves hiss,
And as a shaken leaf the land doth shake!
Awake, O shepherding soul, and take command!—
—Nay, vain, vain words: how shall he understand?

FOAM OF THE PAST

I

THRENODIES AND SONGS

CHANTS AND DIRGES

FOAM OF THE PAST

TO W. B. YEATS

In a small book in a greater, "The Little Book of the Great Enchantment" in *The Book of White Magic (or Wisdom)* . . . the "Leabhran Mhòr Gheasadaireachd" to give the Gaelic name . . . it is said: "When you have a memory out of darkness, tell to a seer, to a poet, and to a friend, that which you remember: and if the seer say, I see it—and if the poet say, I hear it—and if the friend say, I believe it: then know of a surety that your remembrance is a true remembrance." But if our ancestral memories, or memories of the imagination, or reveries of the imagining mind wandering in a world publicly foregone yet inwardly actual, could become authentic only by a test such as this, then I fear they would indeed be apparent as mere foam, the froth of dream. For where is he who is at once seer and poet and friend? Well, you have the great desire, which is the threshold of vision, and vision itself you have, which is the

white enchantment: your words that you compel to a new and subtle music, and the unknown airs in your mind that shepherd those words into the green glens of your imagination, would reveal you as the poet, though not one of your fellows acclaimed you, or none offered you the mistletoe bough with its old symbolism of wisdom and song: and, finally, I think I may call you friend, for we go one way, the dearer that it is narrow and little trod and leads by the whispering sedge and the wilderness, and meet sometimes on that way, and know that we seek the same Graal, and shall come upon it, beyond that fathomless hollow of green water that lies in the West as our poets say, the "Pool" whose breath is Silence and over which hangs a bow of red flame whitening to its moonwhite core.

So you, perhaps, may say of some of these lines in "From the Hills of Dream" and "Foam of the Past" that they come familiarly to you in other than the sense of mere acquaintance. I think you, too, have known the dew which falls when Dalua whispers under the shadowy rowan-trees, and have heard the laughter of the Hidden Host, and known, . . . not the fairie folk of later legend, . . . but the perilous passage of the great Lords of Shadow, "who tread the deeps of night." You, too,

perhaps, have feared The White Hound and the Red Shepherd: and have known that weariness, too old and deep for words, of which the aged Gaelic woman of the Island of Tiree had dim knowledge when she sang

It is the grey rock I am,
And the grey rain on the rock:
It is the grey wave . . .
That grey hound.

You have heard The Rune of the Winds, the blowing of the four white winds and the three dark winds: perhaps, if you have not seen, or heard, my little Moon-Child, you remember her from long ago, and her loneliness when she sang

I have no playmate but the tide
The seaweed loves with dark brown eyes:
The night-waves have the stars for play,
For me but sighs.

For all poetry is in a sense memory: all art, indeed, is a mnemonic gathering of the innumerable and lost into the found and unique. I am sure that you, too, have seen the rising of the Crimson Moon, and have walked secretly with Midir of the Dew and moon-crown'd Brigid and wave-footed Mánan. For you also the long way that seems brief

and the short way that seems long, who can say with Dalua in *The Immortal Hour*

And if I tread the long, continuous way
Within a narrow round, not thinking it long,
And fare a single hour thinking it many days,
I am not first or last of the Immortal Clan
For whom the long ways of the world are brief
And the short ways heavy with unimagined time.

I have listened so long to the music of the three harpers of Fraech, that what I most love now in the cadence and inward breath of song is that which comes across the thorn. You remember them, the three sons of Boinn of the Sidhe, that fair queen: the three harpers of Fraech in the old tale of the *Táin bo Fraich* . . . who had for bard names Tear-Bringer, Smile-Bringer, and Sleep-Bringer: and how it was from the music of Uaithnê, the self-playing harp of the Everlasting One, that these three were named. And I, too, like Befinn, sister of Boinn, am spell-bound in that vision of sorrowful beauty . . . of beauty that comes secretly out of darkness and greyness and the sighing of wind, as the dew upon the grass and the reed by pale water: and is, for so brief a while: and, as the dew is gathered again swiftly and in silence, is become already a dream, a lost air remembered, a

beautiful thing that might have been. For that is what is hidden in the lament of the shennachies of old, when they sang of the loveliness of Befinn fading, like a leaf of May at the cold fires of Samhain, before the great flame of beauty of her son Fraech, "most beautiful of the men of Erin and Albin" . . . because of what she saw in that exceeding beauty, like the blue dusk at the heart of flame. "Beautiful beyond all beauty of youth, he was: but he has not long lived." That is the burden of the song. And what is this deep undertide of longing for that which is beyond wavering reach, for that which is covered up in the secrecies of things immortal, but the longing of Finnavar, daughter of bright Oilill and dark-browed Maeve, for Fraech, the Son of Beauty, though she had never seen him, and loved only by hearsay, and because of the white passion in her heart, and because that inappeasable desire was more great to her than the things of life? Alas, what sorrowful truth lives in that dark saying of Boinn of the Sidhe . . . "Men shall die who have an ear for harmonies."

So that to you, for one, these poems, however rude in form they may sometimes be, will come with that remembrance of the imagination which is the incalculable air of the

otherworld of poetry. As you know, most of them have their place in tales of mine coloured with the colour of a lost day and of a beauty that is legend: and must suffer by severance from their context, as pluckt pine-branches lose, if not their native savour, at least the light and gloom of their forest-company and the smooth hand of the wind. The sound and colour of a barbarous day may well vanish in these broken recalling strains . . . at their best dimly caught even when, for example, "The Death Dance" be read in its due place in "The Laughter of the Queen," apart from which it is perhaps like an air born a thousand years ago on a Gaelic minstrel's clarsach and played anew to-day with curious artifice on a many-noted instrument. One or two at least of these threnodies and chants will have for you the familiar cadence of thought as well as of the familiar fall of words, for they are but adaptations of what long ago were chanted to rude harps made of applewood and yew. The songs of the Swan-Children of Lir have been sung by many poets: Deirdrê's Lament on leaving Scotland, as she and Nathos (Naois) crossed the Irish Sea, has been a music in every generation of the Gael: and I do no more than remember, and repeat, with an accent of atmosphere or thought or

words, which, perhaps, just reveals the difference between paraphrase and metaphrase. Like Deirdrê, we, too, look often yearningly to a land from which we were exiled in time, but inhabit in dream and longing, saying with her

Glen of the Roes, Glen of the Roes,
In thee I have dreamed to the full my happy dream:
O that where the shallow bickering Ruel flows
I might hear again, o'er its flashing gleam,
The cuckoos calling by the murmuring stream.

F. M.

LEAVES, SHADOWS, AND DREAMS

I have seen all things pass and all men go
Under the shadow of the drifting leaf:
Green leaf, red leaf, brown leaf,
Grey leaf, blown to and fro.
Blown to and fro.

I have seen happy dreams rise up and pass
Silent and swift as shadows on the grass:
Grey shadows of old dreams,
Grey beauty of old dreams,
Grey shadows in the grass.

THE LAMENT OF IAN THE PROUD

What is this crying that I hear in the wind?
Is it the old sorrow and the old grief?
Or is it a new thing coming, a whirling leaf
About the grey hair of me who am weary and
blind?
I know not what it is, but on the moor above
the shore
There is a stone which the purple nets of the
heather bind,
And thereon is writ: *She will return no more.*
O blown whirling leaf,
And the old grief,
And wind crying to me who am old and blind!

DEIRDRÊ IS DEAD . . .

"Deirdrê the beautiful is dead . . . is dead!"
(The House of Usna)

The grey wind weeps, the grey wind weeps,
the grey wind weeps:
Dust on her breast, dust on her eyes, the grey
wind weeps!

Cold, cold it is under the brown sod, and cold
under the grey grass;
Here only the wet wind and the flittermice and
the plovers pass:

I wonder if the wailing birds, and the soft
hair-covered things
Of the air, and the grey wind hear what sigh-
ing song she sings

Down in the quiet hollow where the coiled
twilights of hair
Are gathered into the darkness that broods on
her bosom bare?

Deirdrê is Dead

It is said that the dead sing, though we have
no ears to hear,
And that whoso lists is lickt up of the Shad-
ow, too, because of fear—

But this would give me no fear, that I heard
a sighing song from her lips:
No, but as the green heart of an upthrust
towering billow slips

Down into the green hollow of the ingathering
wave,
So would I slip, and sink, and drown, in her
grassy grave.

For is not my desire there, hidden away under
the cloudy night
Of her long hair that was my valley of whis-
pers and delight—

And in her two white hands, like still swans
on a frozen lake,
Hath she not my heart that I have hidden
there for dear love's sake?

Alas, there is no sighing song, no breath in
the silence there:
Not even the white moth that loves death flits
through her hair

Deirdrê is Dead

As the bird of Brigid, made of foam and the
pale moonwhite wine
Of dreams, flits under the sombre windless
plumes of the pine.

I hear a voice crying, crying, crying: is it the
wind
I hear, crying its old weary cry time out of
mind?

The grey wind weeps, the grey wind weeps,
the grey wind weeps:
Dust on her breast, dust on her eyes, the grey
wind weeps!

HEART O' BEAUTY

O where are thy white hands, Heart o' Beauty?
Heart o' Beauty!
They are as white foam on the swept sands,
Heart o' Beauty!
They are as white swans i' the dusk, thy white hands,
Wild swans in flight over shadowy lands,
Heart o' Beauty!

O lift again thy white hands, Heart o' Beauty,
Heart o' Beauty!
Harp to the white waves on the yellow sands,
Heart o' Beauty!
They will hearken now to these waving wands,
To the magic wands of thy white hands,
Heart o' Beauty!

From the white dawn till the grey dusk,
Heart o' Beauty!
I hear the unseen waves of unseen strands,
Heart o' Beauty!

Heart O' Beauty

I see the sun rise and set over shadowy lands,
But never, never, never thy white hands, thy
white hands,
Heart o' Beauty!

THE MONODY OF ISLA THE SINGER

"Like Bells on the wind . . ."

Is it time to let the Hour rise and go forth as
a hound loosed from the battle-cars?
Is it time to let the Hour go forth, as the
White Hound with the eyes of flame?
For if it be not time I would have this hour
that is left to me under the stars
Wherein I may dream my dream again, and
at the last whisper one name.

It is the name of one who was more fair than
youth to the old, than life to the young:
She was more fair than the first love of An-
gus the Beautiful, and though I were blind
And deaf for a hundred ages I would see her,
more fair than any poet has sung,
And hear her voice like mournful bells crying
on the wind.

WHITE-HANDS

O where in the north, or where in the south,
or where in the east or west
Is she who hath the flower-white hands and
the swandown breast?
O, if she be west, or east she be, or in the
north or south,
A sword will leap, a horse will prance, ere I
win to Honey-Mouth.

She has great eyes, like the doe on the hill,
and warm and sweet she is,
O, come to me, Honey-Mouth, bend to me,
Honey-Mouth, give me thy kiss!

White-Hands her name is, where she reigns
amid the princes fair:
White hands she moves like swimming swans
athrough her dusk-wave hair:
White hands she puts about my heart, white
hands fan up my breath:
White hands take out the heart of me, and
grant me life or death!

White-Hands

White hands make better songs than hymns,
white hands are young and sweet:
O, a sword for me, O Honey-Mouth, and a
war-horse fleet!

O wild sweet eyes! O glad wild eyes! O
mouth, how sweet it is!
O, come to me, Honey-Mouth! bend to me,
Honey-Mouth! give me thy kiss!

THE DESIRE AND THE LAMENTATION OF COEL

(The noise of harps and tympans. From the wood comes the loud chanting voice of COEL):

O, 'tis a good house, and a palace fair, the Dûn of Macha,
And happy with a great household is Macha there:
Druids she has, and bards, minstrels, harpers, knights;
Hosts of servants she has, and wonders beautiful and rare,
But nought so wonderful and sweet as her face queenly fair,
O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

(Choric Voices in a loud, swelling chant):
O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

(COEL *chants*):
The colour of her great Dûn is the shining whiteness of lime,
And within it are floors strewn with green rushes and couches white;

Soft wondrous silks and blue gold-claspt
mantles and furs
Are there, and jewelled golden cups for
revelry by night:
Thy grianân of gold and glass is filled with
sunshine-light,
O Macha, queen by day, queen by
night!

(*Choric Voices*):
O Macha, queen by day, queen by
night!

Beyond the green portals, and the brown and
red thatch of wings
Striped orderly, the wings of innumerous
stricken birds,
A wide shining floor reaches from wall to
wall, wondrously carven
Out of a sheet of silver, whereon are graven
swords
Intricately ablaze: mistress of many hoards
Art thou, Macha of few words!

(*Choric Voices*):
O Macha of few words!

Fair indeed is thy couch, but fairer still is thy
throne,

A chair it is, all of a blaze of wonderful yellow gold:
There thou sittest, and watchest the women going to and fro,
Each in garments fair and with long locks twisted fold in fold:
With the joy that is in thy house men would not grow old,
O Macha, proud, austere, cold.

(*Choric Voices*):
O Macha, proud, austere, cold!

Of a surety there is much joy to be had of thee and thine,
There in the song-sweet sunlit bowers in that place;
Wounded men might sink in sleep and be well content
So to sleep, and to dream perchance, and know no other grace
Then to wake and look betimes on thy proud queenly face,
O Macha of the Proud Face!

(*Choric Voices*):
O Macha of the Proud Face!

And if there be any here who wish to know
more of this wonder,
Go, you will find all as I have shown, as I
have said:
From beneath its portico, thatched with wings
of birds blue and yellow
Reaches a green lawn, where a fount is fed
From crystal and gems: of crystal and gold
each bed
In the house of Macha of the Ruddy
Head!

(*Choric Voices*):
In the house of Macha of the Ruddy
Head!

In that great house where Macha the queen
has her pleasaunce
There is everything in the whole world that
a man might desire.
God is my witness that if I say little it is for
this,
That I am grown faint with wonder, and
can no more admire,
But say this only, that I live and die in the
fire
Of thine eyes, O Macha, my desire,
With thine eyes of fire!

(*Choric Voices in a loud swelling chant*):

But say this only, that we live and die in the fire
Of thine eyes, O Macha, Dream, Desire,
With thine eyes of fire!

(*Choric Voices repeat their refrains, but fainter, and becoming more faint. Last vanishing sound of the harps and tympans.*)

(*The Voice of* COEL):

And where now is Macha of the proud face and the ruddy hair,
Macha of few words, proud, austere, cold, with the eyes of fire?
Is she calling to the singers down there under the grass,
Is she saying to the bard, sing: and to the minstrel, where is thy lyre?
Or is that her voice that I hear, lonelier and further and higher
Than the wild wailing wind on the moor that echoes my desire,
O Macha of the proud face
And the eyes of fire!

DALUA[1]

I have heard you calling, Dalua
Dalua!
I have heard you on the hill,
By the pool-side still,
Where the lapwings shrill
Dalua . . . dalua . . . dalua!

What is it you call, Dalua,
Dalua!
When the rains fall,
When the mists crawl
And the curlews call
Dalua . . . dalua . . . dalua!

I am the Fool, Dalua,
Dalua!
When men hear me, their eyes
Darken: the shadow in the skies
Droops: and the keening-woman cries
DALUA . . . DALUA . . . DALUA

[1] Dalūa, one of the names of a mysterious being in the Celtic mythology, the Fairy Fool.

THE SONG OF FIONULA

Sleep, sleep, brothers dear, sleep and dream,
Nothing so sweet lies hid in all your years.
Life is a storm-swept gleam
In a rain of tears:
Why wake to a bitter hour, to sigh, to weep?
How better far to sleep—
To sleep and dream.

To sleep and dream, ah, that were well indeed:
Better than sighs, better than tears,
Ye can have nothing better for your meed
In all the years.
Why wake to a bitter hour, to sigh, to weep?
How better far to sleep—
To sleep and dream, ah, that is well indeed!

THE SONG OF AEIFA

From The Swan-Children of Lir

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,
  Across the wind-sprent foam;
The wave shall be your father now,
And the wind alone shall kiss your brow,
  And the waste be your home.

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,
  Your age-long quest to make;
Three hundred years on Moyle's wild breast,
Three hundred years on the wilder west,
  Three hundred years on this lake.

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,
  And Lir shall call in vain
For all his aching heart and tears,
For all the weariness of his years,
  Ye shall not come again.

Speed hence, speed hence, O lone white swans,
  Till the ringing of Christ's bell;
Then at the last ye shall have rest,
And Death shall take ye to his breast
  At the ringing of Christ's bell.

THE SORROW OF THE HOUSE OF LIR

Happy our father Lir afar,
With mead, and songs of love and war:
The salt brine, and the white foam,
With these his children have their home.

In the sweet days of long ago
Soft-clad we wandered to and fro:
But now cold winds of dawn and night
Pierce deep our feathers thin and light.

The hazel mead in cups of gold
We feasted from in days of old:
The sea-weed now our food, our wine
The salt, keen, bitter, barren brine.

On soft warm couches once we pressed:
White harpers lulled us to our rest:
Our beds are now where the sea raves,
Our lullaby the clash of waves.

Alas! the fair sweet days are gone
When love was ours from dawn to dawn:
Our sole companion now is pain,
Through frost and snow, through storm and rain.

Beneath my wings my brothers lie
When the fierce ice-winds hurtle by:
On either side and 'neath my breast
Lir's sons have known no other rest.

Ah, kisses we shall no more know,
Ah, love so dear exchanged for woe,
All that is sweet for us is o'er,
Homeless we are from shore to shore.

THE CHANT OF ARDAN THE PICT

O Colum and monks of Christ
It is peace we are having this night:
Sure, peace is a good thing,
And I am glad with the gladness.

We worship one God,
Though ye call him Dè—
And I say not, O Dia!
But cry Bea'uil!

For it is one faith for man,
And one for the living world,
And no man is wiser than another—
And none knoweth much.

None knoweth a better thing than this:
The Sword, Love, Song, Honour, Sleep.
None knoweth a surer thing than this:
Birth, Sorrow, Pain, Weariness, Death.

THE LAMENTATION OF BALVA THE MONK

Balva the old monk I am called: when I was
young, Balva Honeymouth.
That was before Colum the White came to
Iona in the West.
She whom I loved was a woman whom I won
out of the South,
And I had a good heaven with my lips on
hers and with breast to breast.

Balva the old monk I am called: were it not
for the fear
That the soul of Colum the White would meet
my soul in the Narrows
That sever the living and dead, I would rise
up from here
And go back to where men pray with spears
and arrows.

Balva the old monk I am called: ugh! ugh!
the cold bell of the matins—'tis dawn!
Sure it's a dream I have had that I was in a
warm wood with the sun ashine,

And that against me in the pleasant greenness
was a soft fawn,
And a voice that whispered "Balva Honey-
mouth, drink, I am thy wine!"

THE LAST NIGHT OF ARTÂN THE CULDEE

It is but a little thing to sit here in the silence
and the dark:
For I remember the blazing noon when I saw
Oona the White:
I remember the day when we sailed the Moyle
in our skin-built barque;
And I remember when Oona's lips were on
mine in the heart of the night.

So it is a little thing to sit here, hearing
nought, seeing nought:
When the dawn breaks they will hurry me
hence to the new-dug grave:
It will be quiet there, if it be true what the
good Colum has taught,
And I shall hear Oona's voice as a sleeping
seal hears the moving wave.

OONA OF THE DARK EYES AND THE CRYING OF WIND

I have fared far in the dim woods:
And I have known sorrow and grief,
And the incalculable years
That haunt the solitudes.
Where now are the multitudes
Of the Field of Spears?
Old tears
Fall upon them as rain,
Their eyes are quiet under the brown leaf.

I have seen the dead, innumerous:
I too shall lie thus,
And thou, Congal, thou too shalt lie
Still and white
Under the starry sky,
And rise no more to any Field of Spears,
But, under the brown leaf,
Remember grief
And the old, salt, bitter tears.

And I have heard the crying of wind.
It is the crying that is in my heart:

Oona of the Dark Eyes

Oona of the Dark Eyes, Oona of the Dark
Eyes,
Oona, Oona, Oona, Heart of my Heart!
But there is only crying of wind
Through the silences of the sky,
Dews that fall and rise,
The faring of long years,
And the coverlet of the brown leaf
For the old familiar grief
And the old tears.

THE LOVE-SONG OF DROSTAN

(From "Drostan and Yseul": an unpublished drama.)

DROSTAN: *You have drunken of the cup of wisdom. Let me also drink.*

[Suddenly snatches a small clarsach from the woman's hand, and to its wild and rude music chants—

In the days of the Great Fires when the hills were aflame,
Aed the Shining God lay by a foamwhite mountain,
The white thigh of moon-crown'd Dana, Beautiful Mother.
And the wind fretted the blue with the tossed curling clouds
Of her tangled hair, and like two flaming stars were her eyes
Torches of sunfire and moonfire: and her vast breasts
Heaved as the sea heaves in the white calms, and the wind of her sighs

Were as the winds of sunrise soaring the peaks of the eagles—
Dana, Mother of the Gods, moon-crown'd, sea-shod, wonderful!

" Fire of my love," she cried. . . . Aed of the Sunlight and Shadow
Laughed: and he rose till he grew more vast than Dana:
The sun was his trampling foot, and he wore the moon as a feather:
And he lay by Dana: and the world swayed, and the stars swung.
Thus was Oengus born, Lord of Love, Son of Wisdom and Death.

Hear us, Oengus, Beautiful, Terrible, Sun-Lord and Death-Lord!
Give us the white flame of love born of Aed and of Dana—
Hearken, thou Pulse of hearts, and let the white doves from your lips
Cover with passionate wings the silence between us,
Where a white fawn leaps and only Yseul and I behold it.

THE CUP

Chuir Muiril mirr ann,
Chuir Uiril mil ann,
Chuir Muirinn fion ann,
'S chuir Michal ann buadh.

"Muriel placed myrrh in it:
Uriel placed honey in it:
Murien placed wine in it:
And Michael strength."

The Cup of bitter-sweet I know
That with old wine of love doth glow:
The dew of tears to it doth go,
And wisdom is its hidden woe.

Were I but young again to throw
This cup where the wild thistles grow,
Or where, oblivious, ceaseless, slow,
The grey tumultuous waters flow!

THE LOVE-CHANT OF CORMAC CONLINGAS

Oimé, Oimé, woman of the white breasts,
Eilidh![1]
Woman of the golden hair, and lips of the
red, red rowan!
Oimé, O-rì, Oimé!

Where is the swan that is whiter, with breast
more smooth,
Or the wave on the sea that moves as thou
movest, Eilidh—
Oimé, a-rò; Oimé, a-rò!

It is the marrow in my bones that is aching,
aching, Eilidh:
It is the blood in my body that is a bitter wild
tide, Oimé!
O-rì, Ohion, O-rì, aròne!

Is it the heart of thee calling that I am hear-
ing, Eilidh,
Or the wind in the wood, or the beating of
the sea, Eilidh,
Or the beating of the sea?

[1] Eilidh is pronounced Eily.

The Love-Chant of Cormac Conlingas

Shule, shule agràh, shule agràh, shule agràh,
Shule!
Heart of me, move to me! move to me, heart
of me, Eilidh, Eilidh,
Move to me!

Ah! let the wild hawk take it, the name of me,
Cormac Conlingas,
Take it and tear at thy heart with it, heart
that of old was so hot with it,
Eilidh, Eilidh, O-rì, Eilidh, Eilidh!

THE DEATH-DIRGE FOR CATHAL

Out of the wild hills I am hearing a voice, O Cathal!
And I am thinking it is the voice of a bleeding sword.
Whose is that sword? I know it well: it is the sword of the Slayer—
Him that is called Death, and the song that it sings I know:—
O where is Cathal mac Art, the white cup for the thirst of my lips?

Out of the cold greyness of the sea I am hearing, O Cathal,
I am hearing a wave-muffled voice, as of one who drowns in the depths:
Whose is that voice? I know it well: it is the voice of the Shadow—
Her that is called the Grave, and the song that she sings I know:—
O where is Cathal mac Art, that has warmth for the chill that I have?

The Death-Dirge for Cathal

Out of the hot greenness of the wood I am
hearing, O Cathal,
I am hearing a rustling step, as of one stum-
bling blind.
Whose is that rustling step? I know it well:
the rustling walk of the Blind One—
Her that is called Silence, and the song that
she sings I know:—
O where is Cathal mac Art, that has tears to
water my stillness?

THE DEATH DANCE

O arone a-ree, eily arone, arone!
'Tis a good thing to be sailing across the seas!
How the women smile and the children are
laughing glad
When the galleys go out into the blue sea—
arone!
O eily arone, arone!

But the children may laugh less when the
wolves come,
And the women may smile less in the win-
ter-cold—
For the Summer-sailors will not come again,
arone!
O arone a-ree, eily arone, arone!

I am thinking they will not sail back again,
O no!
The yellow-haired men that came sailing
across the sea:
For 'tis wild apples they would be, and swing
on green branches,
And sway in the wind for the corbies to preen
their eyne,
O eily arone, eily a-ree!

And it is pleasure for Scathach the Queen to
see this:
To see the good fruit that grows on the Tree
of the Stones:
Long black fruit it is, wind-swayed by its yel-
low roots,
And like men they are with their feet danc-
ing in the void air!
O, O, arone, a-ree, eily arone!

O arone a-ree, eily arone, arone,
O, O, arone, a-ree, eily arone!

THE END OF AODH-OF-THE-SONGS

The swift years slip and slide adown the steep;
The slow years pass; neither will come again.
Yon huddled years have weary eyes that weep,
These laugh, these moan, these silent frown, these plain,
These have their lips curl'd up with proud disdain.

O years with tears, and tears through weary years,
How weary I who in your arms have lain:
Now, I am tired: the sound of slipping spears
Moves soft, and tears fall in a bloody rain,
And the chill footless years go over me who am slain.

I hear, as in a wood, dim with old light, the rain,
Slow falling; old, old, weary, human tears:
And in the deepening dark my comfort is my Pain,
Sole comfort left of all my hopes and fears,
Pain that alone survives, gaunt hound of the shadowy years.

THE LAMENT OF DARTHOOL

Ionmhuin tir, an tir ud shoir—
Alba go na h'-iongantaibh;
Nocha ttiocfainn aiste ale,
Muna ttagainn le Naoise.

O woods of Oona, I can hear the singing
Of the west wind among the branches green
And the leaping and laughing of cool waters springing,
And my heart aches for all that has been,
For all that has been, my Home, all that has been!

Glenmassan! O Glenmassan!
High the sorrel there, and the sweet fragrant grasses:
It would be well if I were listening now to where
In Glenmassan the sun shines and the cool west wind passes,
Glenmassan of the grasses!

The Lament of Darthool

Lock Etive, O fair Loch Etive, that was my
first home,
I think of thee now when on the grey-green
sea—
And beneath the mist in my eyes and the fly-
ing foam
I look back wearily,
I look back wearily to thee!

Glen Orchy, O Glen Orchy, fair sweet glen,
Was ever I more happy than in thy shade?
Was not Nathos there the happiest of men?
O may thy beauty never fade,
Most fair and sweet and beautiful glade.

Glen of the Roes, Glen of the Roes,
In thee I have dreamed to the full my happy
dream:
O that where the shallow bickering Ruel
flows,
I might hear again, o'er its flashing gleam,
The cuckoos calling by the murmuring stream.

THE LOVE-KISS OF DERMID AND GRAINNE

When by the twilit sea these twain were come
Dermid spake no one word, Grainne was dumb,
And in the hearts of both deep silence was.
"Sorrow upon me, love," whispered the grass;
"Sorrow upon me, love," the sea-bird cried;
"Sorrow upon me, love," the lapsed wave sighed.

"For what the King has willed, that thing must be,
O Dermid! As two waves upon this sea
Wind-swept we are,—the wind of his dark mind,
With fierce inevitable tides behind."
"What would you have, O Grainne: he is King."
"I would we were the birds that come with Spring,
The purple-feathered birds that have no home,
The birds that love, then fly across the foam."

"Give me thy mouth, O Dermid," Grainne said
Thereafter, and whispering thus she leaned her head—
Ah, supple, subtle snake she glided there
Till, on his breast, a kiss-deep was her hair
That twisted serpent-wise in gold red pain
From where his lips held high their proud disdain.
"Here, here," she whispered low, "here on my mouth
The swallow, Love, hath found his haunted South."

Then Dermid stooped and passionlessly kissed.
But therewith Grainne won what she had missed,
And that night was to her, and all sweet nights
Thereafter, as Love's flaming swallow-flights
Of passionate passion beyond speech to tell.
But Dermid knew how vain was any spell

Against the wrath of Finn: and Grainne's breath
To him was ever chill with Grainne's death;
Full well he knew that in a soundless place

His own wraith stood and with a moon-white
face
Watched its own shadow laugh and shake its
spear
Far in a phantom dell against a phantom deer.

THE TRYST OF QUEEN HYNDE

Queen Hynde was in the rowan-wood with
scarlet fruit aflame,
Her face was as the berries were, one sun-hot
wave of shame.

With scythes of fire the August sun mowed
down vast swathes of shade:
With blazing eyes the waiting queen stared on
her steel-blue blade.

"What, thirsty hound," she muttered low,
"with thirst you flash and gleam:
Bide, bide a wee, my bonnie hound, I'll show
ye soon a stream!"

The sun had tossed against the West his
broken scythes of fire
When Lord Gillanders bowed before his
Queen and Sweet Desire.

She did not give him smile or kiss; her hand
she did not give:
"But are ye come for death," she said, "or
are ye come to live?"

Gillanders reined and looked at her: "Hynde,
Queen and Love," he said,
"I wooed in love, I come in love, to this the
tryst we made:

"Why are your eyes so fierce and wild? why
is your face so white?
I love you with all my love," he said, "by day
and by night."

"What o' the word that's come to me, of how
my lord's to wed
The lilywhite maid o' one that has a gold
crown on his head?

"What o' the word that yesternight ye wan-
toned with my name,
And on a windy scorn let loose the blown leaf
o' my shame?"

The Lord Gillanders looked at her, and never
a word said he,
But sprang from off his great black horse and
sank upon his knee.

"This is my love," said white Queen Hynde,
"and this, and this, and this"—
Four times she stabbed him to the heart while
she his lips did kiss.

She left him in the darkling wood: and as she
rode she sang
(The little notes swirled in and out amid the
horsehoof clang)

My love was sweet, was sweet, was sweet,
but not so sweet as now!
A deep long sleep my sweet love has beneath
the rowan-bough.

They let her in, they lifted swords, his head
each one did bare:
Slowly she bowed, slowly she passed, slowly
she clomb the stair:

Her little son she lifted up, and whispered
'neath his cries—
" The old king's son, they say; mayhap; he has
Gillander's eyes."

THE SONG OF AHÈZ THE PALE

But this was in the old, old, far-off days,
But this was in the old, old, far-off days.

They rode beneath the ancient boughs, and as they rode she sang,
But at the last both silent were: only the horse-hoofs rang.

Guenn took up his sword, and she felt its shining blade,
And she laughed and vowed it fitted ill for the handling of a maid.

He looked at her, and darkly smiled, and said she was a queen:
For she could swing the white sword high and love its dazzling sheen.

She lifted up the great white sword and swung it o'er his head—
"Ah, you may smile, my lord, now you may smile," she said.

For this was in the old, old, far-off days,
For this was in the old, old, far-off days.

THE WAR-SONG OF THE VIKINGS

Let loose the hounds of war,
  The whirling swords!
Send them leaping afar,
Red in their thirst for war;
Odin laughs in his car
  At the screaming of the swords!

Far let the white-ones fly,
  The whirling swords!
Afar off the ravens spy
Death-shadows cloud the sky.
Let the wolves of the Gael die
  'Neath the screaming swords!

The Shining Ones yonder
  High in Valhalla
Shout now, with thunder:
Drive the Gaels under,
Cleave them asunder—
  Swords of Valhalla!

THE CRIMSON MOON

Behind the Legions of the Sun, the Star Battalions of the night,
The reddening of the West I see, from morn till dusk, from dusk till light.
A day must surely come at last, and that day soon,
When the Hidden People shall march out beneath the Crimson Moon.

Our palaces shall crumble then, our towers shall fall away,
And on the plains our burning towns shall flaunt a desolate day:
The cities of our pride shall wear tiaras of red flame,
And all our phantom glory be an idle wind-blown name.

What shall our vaunt be on that day, or who thereon shall hear
The laughter of our laughing lips become the wail of fear?
Our vaunt shall be the windy dust in eddies far and wide,

The hearing, theirs who follow us with swift
and dreadful stride.

A cry of lamentation, then, shall sweep from
land to land:
A myriad waving hands shall shake above a
myriad strand:
The Day shall swoon before a Shade of vast
ancestral Night,
Till a more dreadful Morn awake to flood and
spume of light.

This is the prophecy of old, before the roam-
ing tribes of Man
Spread Multitude athwart the heirdom of an
earlier Clan—
Before the gods drank Silence, and hid their
way with cloud,
And Man uprose and claimed the Earth and
all the starry crowd.

So Man conceived and made his dream, till at
the last he smiled to see
Its radiant skirts brush back the stars from
Immortality:
He crowned himself with the Infinite, and
gave his Soul a Home,
And then the quiet gods awoke and blew his
life to foam.

This is the Dream I see anew, when all the
West is red with light,
Behind the Legions of the Sun, the Star Bat-
talions of the night.
Verily the day may come at last, and that day
soon,
When the Hidden People shall march out be-
neath the Crimson Moon.

THE WASHER OF THE FORD

There is a lonely stream afar in a lone dim
land;
It hath white dust for shore it has, white bones
bestrew the strand:
The only thing that liveth there is a naked
leaping sword;
But I, who a seer am, have seen the whirling
hand
Of the Washer of the Ford.

A shadowy shape of cloud and mist, of gloom
and dusk, she stands,
The Washer of the Ford:
She laughs, at times, and strews the dust
through the hollow of her hands.
She counts the sins of all men there, and slays
the red-stained horde—
The ghosts of all the sins of men must know
the whirling sword
Of the Washer of the Ford.

She stoops and laughs when in the dust she
sees a writhing limb:
"Go back into the ford," she says, "and
hither and thither swim;

Then I shall wash you white as snow, and
shall take you by the hand,
And slay you there in silence with this my
whirling brand,
And trample you into the dust of this white,
windless sand"—
This is the laughing word
Of the Washer of the Ford
Along that silent strand.

THE MOURNERS

(From the Breton)

When they had made the cradle
  Of ivory and of gold,
Their hearts were heavy still
  With the sorrow of old.

And ever as they rocked, the tears
  Ran down, sad tears:
Who is it lieth dead therein,
  Dead all these weary years?

And still they rock that cradle there
  Of ivory and of gold:
For in their minds the shadow is
  The Shadow of Old.

They weep, and know not what they weep;
  They wait a vain re-birth:
Vanity of vanities, alas,
    For there is but one birth
    On the wide green earth.

FOAM OF THE PAST

II

MILKING SIAN

Give up thy milk to her who calls
Across the low green hills of Heaven
And stream-cool meads of Paradise!

Across the low green hills of Heaven
How sweet to hear the milking call,
The milking call i' the meads of Heaven:

Stream-cool the meads of Paradise,
Across the low green hills of Heaven.

Give up thy milk to her who calls,
Sweet voiced amid the Starry Seven.
Give up thy milk to her who calls!

THE KYE-SONG OF ST. BRIDE

O sweet St. Bride of the
    Yellow, yellow hair:
Paul said, and Peter said,
And all the saints alive or dead
Vowed she had the sweetest head,
Bonnie, sweet St. Bride of the
    Yellow, yellow hair.

White may my milkin' be,
    White as thee:
Thy face is white, thy neck is white,
Thy hands are white, thy feet are white,
For thy sweet soul is shinin' bright—
    O dear to me,
    O dear to see
    St. Briget white!

Yellow may my butter be,
    Firm, and round:
Thy breasts are sweet,
Firm, round and sweet,
So may my butter be:
So may my butter be O
    Briget sweet!

Safe thy way is, safe, O
    Safe, St. Bride:
May my kye come home at even,
None be fallin', none be leavin',
Dusky even, breath-sweet even,
Here, as there, where O
    St. Bride thou
Keepest tryst with God in heav'n,
Seest the angels bow
And souls be shriven—
Here, as there, 'tis breath-sweet even
    Far and wide—
Singeth thy little maid
Safe in thy shade
    Briget, Bride!

ST. BRIDE'S LULLABY

Oh, Baby Christ, so dear to me,
Sang Briget Bride:
How sweet thou art,
My baby dear,
Heart of my heart!

Heavy her body was with thee,
Mary, beloved of One in Three—
Sang Briget Bride—
Mary, who bore thee, little lad:
But light her heart was, light and glad
With God's love clad.

Sit on my knee,
Sang Briget Bride:
Sit here
O Baby dear,
Close to my heart, my heart:
For I thy foster-mother am,
My helpless lamb!
O have no fear,
Sang good St. Bride.

St. Bride's Lullaby

None, none,
No fear have I:
So let me cling
Close to thy side
While thou dost sing,
O Briget Bride!

My Lord, my Prince, I sing:
My Baby dear, my King!
Sang Briget Bride.

THE BIRD OF CHRIST

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  Christ upon the Cross:
My little nest was near,
  Hidden in the moss.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  Christ was pale and wan:
His eyes beheld me singing
  Bron, Bron, mo Bron![1]

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  "Come near, O wee brown bird!"
Christ spake, and lo, I lighted
  Upon the Living Word.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  I heard the mocking scorn!
But Holy, Holy, Holy,
  I sang against a thorn!

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  Ah, his brow was bloody:
Holy, Holy, Holy,
  All my breast was ruddy.

[1] "O my Grief, my Grief!"

The Bird of Christ

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  Christ's-Bird shalt thou be:
Thus said Mary Virgin
  There on Calvary.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  A wee brown bird am I:
But my breast is ruddy
  For I saw Christ die.

Holy, Holy, Holy,
  By this ruddy feather,
Colum, call thy monks, and
  All the birds together.

THE MEDITATION OF COLUM

Before the Miracle of the Fishes and the Flies

I

Praise be to God, and a blessing too at that,
and a blessing!
For Colum the White, Colum the Dove, hath
worshipped;
Yea he hath worshipped and made of a desert
a garden,
And out of the dung of men's souls hath made
a sweet savour of burning.

II

A savour of burning, most sweet, a fire for
the altar,
This he hath made in the desert; the hell-saved
all gladden.
Sure he hath put his benison, too, on milch-
cow and bullock,
On the fowls of the air, and the man-eyed
seals, and the otter.

III

But where in his Dûn in the great blue mainland of Heaven
God the Allfather broodeth, where the harpers are harping His glory;
There where He sitteth, where a river of ale poureth ever,
His great sword broken, His spear in the dust, He broodeth.

IV

And this is the thought that moves in His brain, as a cloud filled with thunder
Moves through the vast hollow sky filled with the dust of the stars:
What boots it the glory of Colum, since he maketh a Sabbath to bless me,
And hath no thought of my sons in the deeps of the air and the sea?

ST. CHRISTOPHER OF THE GAEL

Behind the wattle-woven house
Nial the Mighty gently crept
From out a screen of ashtree boughs
To where a captive white-robe slept.

Lightly he moved, as though ashamed;
To right and left he glanced his fears.
Nial the Mighty was he named
Though but an untried youth in years—

But tall he was, as tall as he,
White Dermid of the magic sword,
Or Torcall of the Hebrid Sea,
Or great Cuhoolin of the Ford;

Strong as the strongest, too, he was:
As Balor of the Evil Eye;
As Fionn who kept the Ulster Pass
From dawn till blood-flusht sunset sky.

Much had he pondered all that day
The mystery of the men who died
On crosses raised along the way,
And perished singing side by side.

Modred the chief had sailed the Moyle,
Had reached Iona's guardless-shore,
Had seized the monks when at their toil
And carried northward, bound, a score.

Some he had thrust into the deep,
To see if magic fins would rise:
Some from high rocks he forced to leap,
To see wings fall from out the skies:

Some he had pinned upon tall spears,
Some tossed on shields with brazen clang,
To see if through their blood and tears
Their god would hear the hymns they sang.

But when his oarsmen flung their oars,
And laughed to see across the foam
The glimmer of the highland shores
And smoke-wreaths of the hidden home,

Modred was weary of his sport.
All day he brooded as he strode
Betwixt the reef-encircled port
And the oak-grove of the Sacred Road.

At night he bade his warriors raise
Seven crosses where the foamswept strand
Lay still and white beyond the blaze
Of the hundred camp-fires of the land.

The women milked the late-come kye,
The children raced in laughing glee;
Like sheep from out the fold of the sky
Stars leapt and stared at earth and sea.

At times a wild and plaintive air
Made delicate music far away:
A hill-fox barked before its lair:
The white owl hawked its shadowy prey.

But at the rising of the moon
The druids came from grove and glen,
And to the chanting of a rune
Crucified St. Columba's men.

They died in silence side by side,
But first they sang the evening hymn:
By midnight all but one had died,
At dawn he too was grey and grim.

One monk alone had Modred kept,
A youth with hair of golden-red,
Who never once had sighed or wept,
Not once had bowed his proud young head.

Broken he lay, and bound with thongs.
Thus had he seen his brothers toss
Like crows transfixed upon great prongs,
Till death crept up each silent cross.

Night grew to dawn, to scarlet morn;
Day waned to firelit, starlit night:
But still with eyes of passionate scorn
He dared the worst of Modred's might.

When from the wattle-woven house
Nial the Mighty softly stepped,
And peered beneath the ashtree boughs
To where he thought the whiterobe slept,

He heard the monk's words rise in prayer,
He heard a hymn's ascending breath—
" Christ, Son of God, to Thee I fare
This night upon the wings of death."

Nial the Mighty crossed the space,
He waited till the monk had ceased;
Then, leaning o'er the foam-white face,
He stared upon the dauntless priest.

" Speak low," he said, " and tell me this:
Who is the king you hold so great?—
Your eyes are dauntless flames of bliss
Though Modred taunts you with his hate:—

" This god or king, is He more strong
Than Modred is? And does He sleep
That thus your death-in-life is long,
And bonds your aching body keep?"

The monk's eyes stared in Nial's eyes:
" Young giant with a child's white heart,
I see a cross take shape and rise,
And thou upon it nailèd art!"

Nial looked back: no cross he saw
Looming from out the dreadful night:
Yet all his soul was filled with awe,
A thundercloud with heart of light.

" Tell me thy name," he said, " and why
Thou waitest thus the druid knife,
And carest not to live or die?
Monk, hast thou little care of life?"

" Great care of that I have," he said,
And looked at Nial with eyes of fire:
" My life begins when I am dead,
There only is my heart's desire."

Nial the mighty sighed. " Thy words
Are as the idle froth of foam,
Or clashing of triumphant swords
When Modred brings the foray home.

" My name is Nial: Nial the Strong:
A lad in years, but as you see
More great than heroes of old song
Or any lordly men that be.

" To Modred have I come from far,
O'er many a hill and strath and stream,
To be a mighty sword in war,
And this because I dreamed a dream:

" My dream was that my strength so great
Should serve the greatest king there is:
Modred the Pict thus all men rate,
And so I sought this far-off Liss.

" But if there be a greater yet,
A king or god whom he doth fear,
My service he shall no more get,
My strength shall rust no longer here."

The monk's face gladdened. " Go, now, go;
To Modred go: he sitteth dumb,
And broods on what he fain would know:
And say, *' O King, the Cross is come! '*

" Then shall the king arise in wrath,
And bid you go from out his sight,
For if he meet you on his path
He'll leave you stark and still and white.

" Thus shall he show, great king and all,
He fears the glorious Cross of Christ,
And dreads to hear slain voices call
For vengeance on the sacrificed.

" But, Nial, come not here again:
Long before dawn my soul shall be
Beyond the reach of any pain
That Modred dreams to prove on me.

" Go forth thyself at dawn, and say
' This is Christ's holy natal morn,
My king is He from forth this day
When He to save mankind was born ':

" Go forth and seek a lonely place
Where a great river fills the wild;
There bide, and let thy strength be grace,
And wait the Coming of a Child.

" A wondrous thing shall then befall:
And when thou seek'st if it be true,
Green leaves along thy staff shall crawl,
With flowers of every lovely hue."

The monk's face whitened, like sea-foam:
Seaward he stared, and sighed " I go—
Farewell—my Lord Christ calls me home! "
Nial stooped and saw death's final throe.

An hour before the dawn he rose
And sought out Modred, brooding, dumb;
" O King," he said, " my bond I close,
King Christ I seek: the Cross is come! "

Swift as a stag's leap from a height
King Modred drew his dreadful sword:
Then as a snow-wraith, silent, white,
He stared and passed without a word.

Before the flush of dawn was red
A druid came to Nial the Great:
"The doom of death hath Modred said,
Yet fears this Christ's mysterious hate:

"So get you hence, you giant-thewed man:
Go your own way: come not again:
No more are you of Modred's clan:
Go now, forthwith, lest you be slain."

Nial went forth with gladsome face;
No more of Modred's clan he was:
"Now, now," he cried, "Christ's trail I'll
trace,
And nowhere turn, and nowhere pause."

He laughed to think how Modred feared
The wrath of Christ, the monk's white king:
"A greater than Modred hath appeared,
To Him my sword and strength I bring."

All day, all night, he walked afar:
He saw the moon rise white and still:
The evening and the morning star:
The sunrise burn upon the hill.

He heard the moaning of the seas,
The vast sigh of the sunswept plain,
The myriad surge of forest-trees;
Saw dusk and night return again.

At falling of the dusk he stood
Upon a wild and desert land:
Dark fruit he gathered for his food,
Drank water from his hollowed hand,

Cut from an ash a mighty bough
And trimmed and shaped it to the half:
" Safe in the desert am I now,
With sword," he said, " and with this staff."

The stars came out: Arcturus hung
His ice-blue fire far down the sky:
The Great Bear through the darkness swung:
The Seven Watchers rose on high.

A great moon flooded all the west.
Silence came out of earth and sea
And lay upon the husht world's breast,
And breathed mysteriously.

Three hours Nial walked, three hours and more:
Then halted when beyond the plain
He stood upon that river's shore
The dying monk had bid him gain.

A little house he saw: clay-wrought,
Of wattle woven through and through:
Then, all his weariness forgot,
The joy of drowning-sleep he knew.

Three hours he slept, and then he heard
A voice—and yet a voice so low
It might have been a dreaming bird
Safe-nested by the rushing flow.

Almost he slept once more: then, *Hush!*
Once more he heard above the noise
And tempest of the river's rush
The thin faint words of a child's voice.

" Good Sir, awake from sleep and dream,
Good Sir, come out and carry me
Across this dark and raging stream
Till safe on the other side I be."

Great Nial shivered on his bed:
" No human creature calls this night,
It is a wild fetch of the dead,"
He thought, and shrunk, and shook with fright.

Once more he heard that infant-cry:
" Come out, Good Sir, or else I drown—
Come out, Good Sir, or else I die
And you, too, lose a golden crown."

"A golden crown"—so Nial thought—
"No—no—not thus shall I be ta'en!
Keep, ghost-of-the-night, your crown gold-
wrought—
Of sleep and peace I am full fain!"

Once more the windy dark was filled
With lonely cry, with sobbing plaint:
Nial's heart grew sore, its fear was stilled,
King Christ, he knew, would scorn him faint.

"Up, up thou coward, thou sluggard, thou,"
He cried, and sprang from off his bed—
"No crown thou seekest for thy brow,
But help for one in pain and dread!"

Out in the wide and lonely dark
No fetch he saw, no shape, no child:
Almost he turned again—but *hark!*
A song rose o'er the waters wild:

A king am I
Tho' a little Child,
Son of God am I,
Meek and mild,
Beautiful—
Because God hath said
Let my cup be full
Of wine and bread.

Come to me
Shaken heart,
Shaken heart!
I will not flee.
My heart
Is thy heart
O shaken heart!
Stoop to my Cup,
Sup,
Drink of the wine:
The wine and the bread,
Saith God,
Are mine—
My Flesh and my Blood!

Throw thy sword in the flood:
Come, shaken heart:
Fearful thou art!
Have no more fear—
Lo, I am here,
The little One,
The Son,
Thy Lord and thy King.

It is I who sing:
Christ, your King . . .
Be not afraid:
Look, I am Light,
A great star

Seen from afar
In the darkness of night:
I am Light,
Be not afraid . . .
Wade, wade
Into the deep flood!
Think of the Bread,
The Wine and the Bread
That are my Flesh and Blood.
Cross, cross the Flood,
Sure is the goal . . .
Be not afraid
O Soul,
Be not afraid!

Nial's heart was filled with joy and pain:
" This is my king, my king indeed:
To think that drown'd in sleep I've lain
When Christ the Child-God crieth in need! "

Swift from his wattled hut he strode,
Stumbling among the grass and bent,
And, seeking where the river flowed,
Far o'er the dark flood peered and leant:

Then suddenly beside him saw
A little Child all clad in white:
He bowed his head in love and awe,
Then lifted high his burthen light.

High on his shoulders sat the Child,
While with strong limbs he fared among
The rushing waters black and wild
And where the fiercest currents swung.

The waters rose more high, more high,
Higher and higher every yard . . .
Nial stumbled on with sob and sigh,
Christ heard him panting sore and hard.

" O Child," Nial cried, " forbear, forbear!
Heard you not how these waters whirled!
The weight of all the earth I bear,
The weary weight of all the world! "

" Christopher! " . . . low above the noise,
The rush, the darkness, Nial heard
The far-off music of a Voice
That said all things in saying one word—

" Christopher . . . this thy name shall be!
Christ-bearer is thy name, even so
Because of service done to me
Heavy with weight of the world's woe."

With breaking sobs, with panting breath
Chistopher grasped a bent-held dune,
Then with flung staff and as in death
Forward he fell in a heavy swoon.

All night he lay in silence there,
But safe from reach of surging tide:
White angels had him in their care,
Christ healed and watched him side by side.

When all the silver wings of dawn
Had waved above the rose-flusht east,
Christopher woke . . . his dream was gone.
The angelic songs had ceased.

Was it a dream in very deed,
He wondered, broken, trembling, dazed?
His staff he lifted from the mead
And as an upright sapling raised.

Lo, it was as the monk had said—
If he would prove the vision true,
His staff would blossom to its head
With flowers of every lovely hue.

Christopher bowed: before his eyes
Christ's love fulfilled the holy hour . . .
A south-wind blew, green leaves did rise
And the staff bloomed a myriad flower!

Christopher bowed in holy prayer,
While Christ's love fell like healing dew:
God's father-hand was on him there:
The peace of perfect peace he knew.

THE CROSS OF THE DUMB

A CHRISTMAS ON IONA, LONG, LONG AGO

One eve, when St. Columba strode
In solemn mood along the shore,
He met an angel on the road
Who but a poor man's semblance bore.

He wondered much, the holy saint,
What stranger sought the lonely isle,
But seeing him weary and wan and faint
St. Colum hailed him with a smile.

" Remote our lone Iona lies
Here in the grey and windswept sea,
And few are they whom my old eyes
Behold as pilgrims bowing the knee. . . .

" But welcome . . . welcome . . . stranger-
guest,
And come with me and you shall find
A warm and deer-skinn'd cell for rest
And at our board a welcome kind. . . .

" Yet tell me ere the dune we cross
How came you to this lonely land?
No curraghs in the tideway toss
And none is beached upon the strand!"

The weary pilgrim raised his head
And looked and smiled and said, " From far,
My wandering feet have here been led
By the glory of a shining star. . . ."

St. Colum gravely bowed, and said,
" Enough, my friend, I ask no more;
Doubtless some silence-vow was laid
Upon thee, ere thou sought'st this shore:

" Now, come: and doff this raiment sad
And those rough sandals from thy feet:
The holy brethren will be glad
To haven thee in our retreat."

Together past the praying cells
And past the wattle-woven dome
Whence rang the tremulous vesper bells
St. Colum brought the stranger home.

From thyme-sweet pastures grey with dews
The milch-cows came with swinging tails:
And whirling high, the wailing mews
Screamed o'er the brothers at their pails.

The Cross of the Dumb

A single spire of smoke arose,
And hung, a phantom, in the cold:
Three younger monks set forth to close
The ewes and lambs within the fold.

The purple twilight stole above
The grey-green dunes, the furrowed leas:
And dusk, with breast as of a dove,
Brooded: and everywhere was peace.

Within the low refectory sate
The little clan of holy folk:
Then, while the brothers mused and ate,
The wayfarer arose and spoke. . . .

" O Colum of Iona-Isle,
And ye who dwell in God's quiet place,
Before I crossed your narrow kyle
I looked in Heaven upon Christ's face."

Thereat St. Colum's startled glance
Swept o'er the man so poorly clad,
And all the brethren looked askance
In fear the pilgrim-guest was mad.

" And, Colum of God's Church i' the sea
And all ye Brothers of the Rood,
The Lord Christ gave a dream to me
And bade me bring it ye as food.

The Cross of the Dumb

" Lift to the wandering cloud your eyes
And let them scan the wandering Deep. . . .
Hark ye not there the wandering sighs
Of brethren ye as outcasts keep?"

Thereat the stranger bowed, and blessed;
Then, grave and silent, sought his cell:
St. Colum mused upon his guest,
Dumb wonder on the others fell.

At dead of night the Abbot came
To where the weary wayfarer slept:
" Tell me," he said, " thy holy name . . ."
—No more, for on bowed knees he wept. . . .

Great awe and wonder fell on him;
His mind was like a lonely wild
When suddenly is heard a hymn
Sung by a little innocent child.

For now he knew their guest to be
No man as he and his, but one
Who in the Courts of Ecstasy
Worships, flame-winged, the Eternal Son.

The poor bare cell was filled with light,
That came from the swung moons the Seven
Seraphim swing day and night
Adown the infinite walls of Heaven.

But on the fern-wove mattress lay
No weary guest. St. Colum kneeled,
And found no trace; but, ashen-grey,
Far off he heard glad anthems pealed.

At sunrise when the matins-bell
Made a cold silvery music fall
Through silence of each lonely cell
And over every fold and stall,

St. Colum called his monks to come
And follow him to where his hands
Would raise the Great Cross of the Dumb
Upon the Holy Island's sands. . . .

" For I shall call from out the Deep
And from the grey fields of the skies,
The brethren we as outcasts keep,
Our kindred of the dumb wild eyes. . . .

" Behold, on this Christ's natal morn,
God wills the widening of His laws,
Another miracle to be born—
For lo, our guest an Angel was! . . .

" His Dream the Lord Christ gave to him
To bring to us as Christ-Day food,
That Dream shall rise a holy hymn
And hang like a flower upon the Rood! . . ."

Thereat, while all with wonder stared
St. Colum raised the Holy Tree:
Then all with Christ-Day singing fared
To where the last sands lipped the sea.

St. Colum raised his arms on high . . .
" O ye, all creatures of the wing,
Come here from out the fields o' the sky,
Come here and learn a wondrous thing!"

At that the wild clans of the air
Came sweeping in a mist of wings—
Ospreys and fierce solanders there,
Sea-swallows wheeling mazy rings,

The foam-white mew, the green-black scart,
The famishing hawk, the wailing tern,
All birds from the sand-building mart
To lonely bittern and heron. . . .

St. Colum raised beseeching hands
And blessed the pastures of the sea:
" Come, all ye creatures, to the sands,
Come and behold the Sacred Tree!"

At that the cold clans of the wave
With spray and surge and splash appeared:
Up from each wrack-strewn, lightless cave
Dim day-struck eyes affrighted peered.

The pollacks came with rushing haste,
The great sea-cod, the speckled bass;
Along the foaming tideway raced
The herring-tribes like shimmering glass:

The mackerel and the dog-fish ran,
The whiting, haddock, in their wake:
The great sea-flounders upward span,
The fierce-eyed conger and the hake:

The greatest and the least of these
From hidden pools and tidal ways
Surged in their myriads from the seas
And stared at St. Columba's face.

"Hearken," he cried, with solemn voice—
"Hearken! ye people of the Deep,
Ye people of the skies, Rejoice!
No more your soulless terror keep!

"For lo, an Angel from the Lord
Hath shown us that wherein we sin—
But now we humbly do His Word
And call you, Brothers, kith and kin. . . .

"No more we claim the world as ours
And everything that therein is—
To-day, Christ's-Day, the infinite powers
Decree a common share of bliss.

" I know not if the new-waked soul
That stirs in every heart I see
Has yet to reach the far-off goal
Whose symbol is this Cross-shaped Tree. . . .

" But, O dumb kindred of the skies,
O kinsfolk of the pathless seas,
All scorn and hate I exorcise,
And wish you nought but Love and Peace! "

* * *

Thus, on that Christmas-day of old
St. Colum broke the ancient spell.
A thousand years away have rolled,
'Tis now . . . " a baseless miracle."

O fellow-kinsmen of the Deep,
O kindred of the wind and cloud,
God's children too . . . how He must weep
Who on that day was glad and proud!

NAOI MIANNAIN

Miann mna sithe, braon:
Miann Sluagh, gaoth:
Miann fitheach, fuil:
Miann eunarag, an fasaich:
Miann faoileag, faileagan mhara:
Miann Bàrd, fith-cheol-min lhuchd nan trusganan uaine:
Miann fear, gaol bhean:
Miann mna, chlann beag:
Miann anama, ais.

Nine Desires

The desire of the fairy women, dew:
The desire of the fairy host, wind:
The desire of the raven, blood:
The desire of the snipe, the wilderness:
The desire of the seamew, the lawns of the sea:
The desire of the poet, the soft low music of the Tribe of the Green Mantles:
The desire of man, the love of woman:
The desire of women, the little clan:
The desire of the soul, wisdom.

THROUGH THE IVORY GATE

"Green thou would'st not be plucked, thy purple fruit I longed for. . . ."

THE STEPHANOS OF PHILIPPUS.

"Là-bas, tout nous appelle. . . . Et, qui sait, tous les rêves à réaliser! . . .

"À quoi bon les réaliser . . . ils sont si beaux!"

AXEL.

"Love is as a vapour that is licked up of the wind. Let whoso longeth after this lovely mist—that as a breath is, and is not—beware of this wind. There is no sorrow like unto the sorrow of this wind."

LEABHRAN MHÒR-GHEASADAIREACHD.
(*The Little Book of the Great Enchantment.*)

"The waves of the sea have spoken to me; the wild birds have taught me; the music of many waters has been my master."

KALEVALA.

THE SECRET DEWS

Poor little songs, children of sorrow, go.
A wind may take you up, and blow you far.
My heart will go with you, too, wherever you go.

As the little leaves in the wood, they pass:
The wind has lifted them, and the wind is gone.
Have I too not heard the wind come, and pass?

The secret dews fall under the Evening-Star,
And there is peace I know in the west: yet, if there be no dawn,
The secret dews fall under the Evening-Star.

THE ENCHANTED VALLEYS

By the Gate of Sleep we enter the Enchanted Valleys.
White soundless birds fly near the twilit portals:
Follow, and they lead to the Silent Alleys.

Grey pastures are there, and hush'd spell-bound woods,
And still waters, girt with unwhispering reeds:
Lost dreams linger there, wan multitudes:

They haunt the grey waters, the alleys dense and dim,
The immemorial woods of timeless age,
And where the forest leans on the grey sea's rim.

Nothing is there of gladness or of sorrow:
What is past can neither be glad nor sad:
It is past: there is no dawn: no to-morrow.

THE VALLEY OF WHITE POPPIES

Between the grey pastures and the dark
wood
A valley of white poppies is lit by the low
moon:
It is the grave of dreams, a holy rood.

It is quiet there: no wind doth ever fall.
Long, long ago a wind sang once a heart-
sweet rune.
Now the white poppies grow, silent and tall.

A white bird floats there like a drifting leaf:
It feeds upon faint sweet hopes and perishing
dreams
And the still breath of unremembering grief.

And as a silent leaf the white bird passes,
Winnowing the dusk by dim forgetful streams.
I am alone now among the silent grasses.

THE VALLEY OF SILENCE

In the secret Valley of Silence
No breath doth fall;
No wind stirs in the branches;
No bird doth call:
As on a white wall
A breathless lizard is still,
So silence lies on the valley
Breathlessly still.

In the dusk-grown heart of the valley
An altar rises white:
No rapt priest bends in awe
Before its silent light:
But sometimes a flight
Of breathless words of prayer
White-wing'd enclose the altar,
Eddies of prayer.

DREAM MEADOWS

Girt with great garths of shadow
Dim meadows fade in grey:
No moon lightens the gloaming,
The meadows know no day:
But pale shapes shifting
From dusk to dusk, or lifting
Frail wings in flight, go drifting
Adown each flowerless way.

These phantom-dreams in shadow
Were once in wild-rose flame;
Each wore a star of glory,
Each had a loved sweet name:
Now they are nameless, knowing
Nor star nor flame, but going
Whither they know not, flowing
Waves without wind or aim.

But later through the gloaming
The Midnight-Shepherd cries:
The trooping shadows follow
Making a wind of sighs:

The fold is hollow and black;
No pathway thence, no track;
No dream ever comes back
Beneath those silent skies.

GREY PASTURES

In the grey gloaming where the white
moth flies—
When I, quiet dust on the forgetful wind,
Shall be untroubled by any breath of
sighs—

It may be I shall fall like dew upon
The still breath of grey pastures such as these
Wherein I wander now 'twixt dusk and
dawn.

See, in this phantom bloom I leave a kiss:
It was given me in fire; now it is grey dust:
Mayhap I may thrill again at the touch
of this.

LONGING

O would I were the cool wind that's blowing
from the sea,
Each loneliest valley I would search till I
should come to thee.

In the dew on the grass is your name, dear,
i' the leaf on the tree—
O would I were the cool wind that's blowing
from the sea.

O would I were the cool wind that's blowing
far from me—
The grey silence, the grey waves, the grey
wastes of the sea.

THE SINGER IN THE WOODS

"Were Memory but a voice. . . ."

Where moongrey-thistled dunes divide the
woods from the sea
Sometimes a phantom drifts, like smoke, from
tree to tree:
His voice is as the thin faint song when the
wind wearily
Sighs in the grass, and sighing, dies: barely it
comes to me.

Sometimes I hear the sighing voice along the
shadowy shore;
Sometimes wave-borne it comes, as when on
labouring oar
Dying men sigh once, and die, at the closing
of the door
They hear below the muffled tides or the dull
drowning roar.

Sometimes he passes through the caves where
twilight dies;
His voice like mist from a valley then doth
rise,

Or, in a windy flight of gathered sighs,
Is blown like perishing smoke against the midnight skies.

But oftenest in the dark woods I hear him sing
Dim, half-remembered things, where the old mosses cling
To the old trees, and the faint wandering eddies bring
The phantom echoes of a phantom Spring.

Lost in the dark gulf of the woods, his song sinks low:
I listen: and hear only the long, inevitable, slow
Falling of wave on wave, the sighing flow:
In the silence I hear my heart sobbing its old woe.

BY THE GREY STONE

It is quiet here: the wet hill-wind's sigh
Sobs faintly, as though behind a curtain of thick grass.
The vanishing curlew wails a fading cry.

I can hear the least soft footfall pass.
Is that the shrewmouse I hear, or does the night-moth whirr?
I have waited so long, so long, so long, alas!

No one. No one. I hear no faintest stir.
Yet Love spake once, with lips of flame and eyes of fire,
With breath of burning frankincense and myrrh—

Spake, and the vow was even as Desire . . .
Terrible, winged, magnific, crested with flame,
So that I bowed before it, mounting gyre upon gyre. . . .

By the Grey Stone

I see now a grey bird by the grey stone
of no name:
It is blind and deaf, and its wings are tipped
with mire.
Is it Love's lordly vow or mine own bitter shame?

THE VALLEY OF PALE BLUE FLOWERS

In a hidden valley a pale blue flower grows.
It is so pale that in the moonshine it is dimmer than dim gold,
And in the starshine paler than the palest rose.

It is the flower of dream. Who holds it is never old.
It is the flower of forgetfulness: and oblivion is youth:
Breathing it, flame is not empty air, dust is not cold.

Lift it, and there is no memory of sorrow or any ruth;
The grey monotone of the low sky is filled with light;
The dim, terrible, inpalpable lie wears the raiment of truth.

I lift it, now, for somewhat in the heart
of the night
Fills me with dread. It may be that, as a
tiger in his lair,
Memory, crouching, waits to spring into
the light.

No, I will clasp it close to my heart, over-
droop with my hair:
I will breathe thy frail faint breath, O pale
blue flower,
And then . . . and then . . . nothing
shall take me unaware!

Nothing: no thought: no fear: only the
invisible power
Of the vast deeps of night, wherein down a
shadowy stair
My soul slowly, slowly, slowly, will sink
to its ultimate hour.

REMEMBRANCE

No more: let there be no more said.
It is over now, the long hope, the beautiful dream.
The poor body of love in his grave is laid.

I had dreamed his shining eyes eternal, alas!
Now, dead love, I know, can never rise again.
Never, never again shall I see even his shadow pass.

A star has ceased to shine in my lonely skies.
Sometimes I dream I see it shining in my heart,
As a bird the windless pool over which it flies.

No: no more: I will not say what I see, there:
Sorrow has depths within depths . . . silence is best:
Farewell, Dead Love: no more the same road we fare.

THE VEILED AVENGER

(FRAGMENT)

A Voice

. . . I am He,
The Veiled Avenger. I am clothed with shadow
The silence and the shadow of your soul
Where it has withered slowly from the light.

Unseen Chorus

The Veiled Avenger speaks. He knows him not.

The Man

I hear a honey voice that murmureth peace,
Peace and oblivion. O ye secret doves
That feed the mind with sweet and perilous breaths
And murmur ever among gossamer dreams,
Bring me the tidings out of the hidden place
Wherein your wings wake fire. Come once again, wild doves

The Veiled Avenger

Of Beauty and Desire and the Twin Flame!
Wild doves, wild doves, bear unto me the
flame
That rises moonwhite amid scarlet fire . . .
(*A lapwing wails.*)
O melancholy bird, Dalua's messenger!
I am too weary now for further thought.

The Veiled Avenger

Pillows of sleepless sorrow. . . . Bow your
head.
To-night I shall build up for you a place
Where sleep shall not be silent and where
dreams
Shall whisper, and a little infinite voice
Shall wail as a wailing plover in your ears.
Then you shall know that shaken voice, and
wake,
Crying your own name.

The Man

Again, the wheeling cry
Where in the dusk the lapwing slips and falls
From ledge to ledge of darkness.

Unseen Chorus

He knoweth not
His own bitter infinite cry we hear him cry!

THE BELLS OF SORROW

It is not only when the sea is dark and chill
and desolate
I hear the singing of the queen who lives be-
neath the ocean:
Oft have I heard her chanting voice when
noon swings wide his golden gate,
Or when the moonshine fills the wave with
snow-white mazy motion.

And some day will it hap to me, when the
black waves are leaping,
Or when within the breathless green I see her
shell-strewn door,
The fatal bells will lure me where my sea-
drown'd death lies sleeping
Beneath the slow white hands of her who
rules the sunken shore.

For in my heart I hear the bells that ring
their fatal beauty,
The wild, remote, uncertain bells that chant
their dim to-morrow;

The Bells of Sorrow

The lonely bells of sorrow, the bells of fatal
beauty,
From lonely heights within my heart tolling
their lonely sorrow.

THE UNKNOWN WIND

"There is a wind that has no name." (*Gaelic Saying.*)

When the day darkens,
When dusk grows light,
When the dew is falling,
    When Silence dreams. . . .
I hear a wind
Calling, calling
By day and by night.

What is the wind
That I hear calling
By day and by night,
    The crying of wind?
When the day darkens,
When dusk grows light,
When the dew is falling?

CANTILENA MUNDI

Where the rainbows rise through sunset rains
By shores forlorn of isles forgot,
A solitary Voice complains
"The world is here, the world is not."

The Voice the Wind is, or the sea,
Or the Spirit of the sundown West:
Or is it but a breath set free
From off the Islands of the Blest?

It may be: but I turn my face
To that which still I hold so dear:
And lo, the voices of the days—
"The World is not, the World is here."

'Tis the same end whichever way,
And either way is soon forgot:
"The World is all in all To-day,
To-morrow all the World is not."

LITTLE CHILDREN OF THE WIND

I hear the little children of the wind
Crying solitary in lonely places:
I have not seen their faces
But I have seen the leaves eddying behind,
The little tremulous leaves of the wind.

IN THE SILENCES OF THE WOODS

In the silences of the woods
I have heard all day and all night
The moving multitudes
Of the Wind in flight.
He is named Myriad:
And I am sad
Often, and often I am glad;
But oftener I am white
With fear of the dim broods
That are his multitudes.

IN THE NIGHT

O wind, why break in idle pain
    This wave that swept the seas?
Foam is the meed of barren dreams
    And hearts that cry for peace!

Lift then, O wind, this heart of mine,
    And whirl aside in foam;
No—wander on, unchanging heart,
    The undrowning deeps thy home!

Less than a billow of the sea
    That at the last doth no more roam,
Less than a wave, less than a wave,
    This thing that hath no home,
    This thing that hath no grave.

THE LORDS OF SHADOW

Where the water whispers 'mid the shadowy rowan-trees
I have heard the Hidden People like the hum of swarming bees:
And when the moon has risen and the brown burn glisters grey
I have seen the Green Host marching in laughing disarray.

Dalua then must sure have blown a sudden magic air
Or with the mystic dew have sealed my eyes from seeing fair:
For the great Lords of Shadow who tread the deeps of night
Are no frail puny folk who move in dread of mortal sight.

For sure Dalua laughed alow, Dalua the fairy Fool,
When with his wildfire eyes he saw me 'neath the rowan-shadowed pool:

His touch can make the chords of life a bitter jangling tune,
The false glows true, the true glows false, beneath his moontide rune.

The laughter of the Hidden Host is terrible to hear,
The Hounds of Death would harry me at lifting of a spear:
Mayhap Dalua made for me the hum of swarming bees
And sealed my eyes with dew beneath the shadowy rowan-trees.

INVOCATION OF PEACE

AFTER THE GAELIC

Deep peace I breathe into you,
O weariness, here:
O ache, here!
Deep peace, a soft white dove to you;
Deep peace, a quiet rain to you;
Deep peace, an ebbing wave to you!
Deep peace, red wind of the east from you;
Deep peace, grey wind of the west to you;
Deep peace, dark wind of the north from you;
Deep peace, blue wind of the south to you!
Deep peace, pure red of the flame to you;
Deep peace, pure white of the moon to you;
Deep peace, pure green of the grass to you;
Deep peace, pure brown of the earth to you;
Deep peace, pure grey of the dew to you,
Deep peace, pure blue of the sky to you!
Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the sleeping stones to you!
Deep peace of the Yellow Shepherd to you,

Deep peace of the Wandering Shepherdess to
you,
Deep peace of the Flock of Stars to you,
Deep peace from the Son of Peace to you,
Deep peace from the heart of Mary to you,
From Briget of the Mantle
Deep peace, deep peace!
And with the kindness too of the Haughty
Father,
Peace!
In the name of the Three who are One,
And by the will of the King of the Elements,
Peace! Peace!

THE DIRGE OF THE FOUR CITIES

"There are four cities that no mortal eye has seen but that the soul knows; these are Gorias, that is in the east; and Finias, that is in the south; and Murias, that is in the west; and Falias, that is in the north. And the symbol of Falias is the stone of death, which is crowned with pale fire. And the symbol of Gorias is the dividing sword. And the symbol of Finias is a spear. And the symbol of Murias is a hollow that is filled with water and fading light."

THE LITTLE BOOK OF THE GREAT ENCHANTMENT.

"Wind comes from the spring star in the East; fire from the summer star in the South; water from the autumn star in the West; wisdom, silence and death from the star in the North."

THE DIVINE ADVENTURE.

THE DIRGE OF THE FOUR CITIES

"The four cities of the world that was: the sunken city of Murias, and the city of Gorias, and the city of Finias, and the city of Falias." (Ancient Gaelic Chronicle.)

Finias and Falias,
  Where are they gone?
Does the wave hide Murias—
  Does Gorias know the dawn?
Does not the wind wail
  In the city of gems?
Do not the prows sail
  Over fallen diadems
And the spires of dim gold
And the pale palaces
Of Murias, whose tale was told
  Ere the world was old?

Do women cry *Alas!* . . .
  Beyond Finias?
Does the eagle pass
Seeing but her shadow on the grass
  Where once was Falias:
And do her towers rise
Silent and lifeless to the frozen skies?

And do whispers and sighs
  Fill the twilights of Finias
With love that has not grown cold
Since the days of old?

Hark to the tolling of bells
  And the crying of wind!
The old spells
  Time out of mind,
They are crying before me and behind!
I know now no more of my pain,
But am as the wandering rain
Or as the wind's shadow on the grass
Beyond Finias of the Dark Rose:
Or, 'mid the pinnacles and still snows
Of the Silence of Falias,
I go: or am as the wave that idly flows
Where the pale weed in songless thickets
    grows
Over the towers and fallen palaces
  Where the Sea-city was,
  The city of Murias.

FINIAS

In the torch-lit city of Finias that flames on
the brow of the South
The Spear that divideth the heart is held in
a brazen mouth—

Arias the flame-white keeps it, he whose
laughter is heard
Where never a man has wandered, where
never a god has stirred.

High kings have sought it, great queens have
sought it, poets have dreamed—
And ever louder and louder the flame-white
laughter of Arias streamed.

For kingdoms shaken and queens forsaken
and high hopes starved in their drouth,
These are the torches ablaze on the walls of
Finias that lightens the South.

Forbear, O Arias, forbear, forbear—lift not
the dreadful Spear—
I had but dreamed of thee, Finias, Finias . . .
now I am stricken . . . now I am here!

FALIAS

In the frost-grown city of Falias lit by the falling stars
I have seen the ravens flying like banners of old wars—
I have seen the snow-white ravens amid the ice-green spires
Seeking the long-lost havens of all old lost desires.

O winged desire and broken, once nested in my heart,
Canst thou, there, give a token, that, even now, thou art?
From bitter war defeated thou too hadst flight afar,
When all my joy was cheated ere set of Morning Star.

Call loud; O ancient Moirias, who dwellest in that place,
Tell me if lost in Falias my old desire hath grace?

If now a snow-white raven it haunts the silent
spires
For the old impossible haven 'mid the old
auroral fires?

GORIAS

In Gorias are gems,
  And pale gold,
Shining diadems
  Gathered of old
From the long fragrant hair
Of dead beautiful queens.

There the reaper gleans
  Vast opals of white air:
The dawn leans
  Upon emerald there:
Out of the dust of kings
The sunrise lifts a cloud of shimmering wings.

In Gorias of the East
  My love was born,
Erias dowered with a sword
  And the treasures of the Morn—
But now all the red gems
And the pale gold
Are as the trampled diadems
  Of the queens of old
  In Gorias the pale-gold.

Have I once heard the least,
  But the least breath, again?
No: my love is no more fain
  Of Gorias of the East.
  Erias hath sheathed this sword
    Long, long ago.
  My heart is old . . .
  Though in Gorias are gems
    And pale gold.

MURIAS

In the sunken city of Murias
  A golden Image dwells:
The sea-song of the trampling waves
  Is as muffled bells
  Where He dwells,
In the city of Murias.

In the sunken city of Murias
  A golden Image gleams:
The loud noise of the moving seas
  Is as woven beams
  Where He dreams,
In the city of Murias.

In the sunken city of Murias,
  Deep, deep beneath the sea
The Image sits and hears Time break
  The heart I gave to thee
  And thou to me,
In the city of Murias.

In the city of Murias,
  Long, oh, so long ago,
Our souls were wed when the world
    was young;

Are we old now, that we know
This silent woe
In the city of Murias?

In the sunken city of Murias
A graven Image dwells:
The sound of our little sobbing prayer
Is as muffled bells
Where He dwells,
In the city of Murias.

THE HOUR OF BEAUTY

"None but God and I
Knows what is in my heart."

SAHARA SONG.

"Wherever snow falls, or water flows, or birds fly, wherever day and night meet in twilight, wherever the blue heaven is hung by clouds, or sown with stars, wherever are forms with transparent boundaries, wherever are outlets into celestial space, wherever is danger, and awe, and love, there is Beauty."

EMERSON.

DIM FACE OF BEAUTY

Dim face of Beauty haunting all the world,
Fair face of Beauty all too fair to see,
Where the lost stars adown the heavens are
hurled,
There, there alone for thee
May white peace be.

For here, where all the dreams of men are
whirled
Like sere torn leaves of autumn to and fro,
There is no place for thee in all the world,
Who driftest as a star,
Beyond, afar.

Beauty, sad face of Beauty, Mystery, Wonder,
What are these dreams to foolish babbling
men?—
Who cry with little noises 'neath the thunder
Of ages ground to sand,
To a little sand.

DREAMS WITHIN DREAMS

I have gone out and seen the lands of Faery,
And have found sorrow and peace and beauty there,
And have not known one from the other, but found each
Lovely and gracious alike, delicate and fair.

" They are children of one mother, she that is called Longing,
Desire, Love," one told me: and another, " her secret name
Is Wisdom:" and another, " they are not three but one:"
And another, " touch them not, seek them not, they are wind and flame."

I have come back from the hidden, silent lands of Faery,
And have forgotten the music of its ancient streams:
And now flame and wind and the long, grey, wandering wave
And beauty and peace and sorrow are dreams within dreams.

A CRY ON THE WIND

Pity *the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:*
Pity the great with love, time out of mind:
This is the song of the grey-haired wandering wind
Since Oisin's mother fled to the hill a spell-bound hind.

Sorrow on love! was the sob that rose in her throat,
I, that a woman was, now wear the wild fawn's coat:
This is to lift the heart to leap like a wave to the oar,
This is to see the heart flung back like foam on the shore.

Have not the hunters heard them, Oisin and she together
Like peewits crying on the wind where the world is sky and heather—
The peewits that wail to each other, rising and wheeling and falling
Till greyness of noon or darkness of dusk is full of a windy calling.

A Cry on the Wind

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind!

O sorrowful face of Deirdrê seen on the hill!
Once I have seen you, once, beautiful, silent, still:
As a cloud that gathers her robe like drifted snow
You stood in the mountain-corrie, and dreamed on the world below.

Like a rising sound of the sea in woods in the heart of the night
I heard a noise as of hounds, and of spears and arrows in flight:
And a glory came like a flame, and morning sprang to your eyes—
And the flame passed, and the vision, and I heard but the wind's sighs.

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind!

Last night I walked by the shore where the machar slopes:
I drowned my heart in the sea, I cast to the wind my hopes.

A Cry on the Wind

What is this thing so great that all the Children of Sorrow
Are weary each morn for night, and weary each night for the morrow!

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind:
This is the song of the grey-haired wandering wind
Since Oisin's mother fled to the hill a spell-bound hind.

VALE, AMOR!

We do not know this thing
  By the spoken word:
It is as though in a dim wood
  One heard a bird
  Suddenly sing:
Then, in the twinkling of an eye
A shadow glooms the earth and sky,
And we stand silent, startled, in a changed mood.

It is but a little thing
  The leaping sword,
When in the startled silence of changed mood
  It comes as when a bird
  Doth suddenly sing.
But thrust of sword or agony of soul
Are alike swift and terrible and strong,
And no foot stirs the dead leaves of that silent wood.

FLAME ON THE WIND

O wind without that moans and cries, O dark
wind in my soul!
I would I were the wet wild wind that's blowing to the Pole!
I'd seek the plunging bergs of ice to cool my
flaming heart . . .

O Flaming Heart,
I'd drown you deep where the great icebergs roll!
I'd follow on thy beating wings the wings of
the wild geese,
I'd seek among the plunging hills the phantom-flight of peace . . .
O is there peace for hearts of fire in gloom
and cold and flight—
Torches of night
'Mid swaying bergs that grind the trampling seas?

O wind without and rain without, O melancholy choir
Of tempest in the lonely night and tempest-whirled desire,

What if there be no peace amid the snow-
clouds of the Pole . . .
O Burning Soul,
Can hills of ice assuage this whirling fire!

O wet wild wind bow down dark wings and
winnow me away,
Whirl me on mighty shadowy wings where's
neither night nor day,
Where 'mid the plunging bergs of ice may
fade a whirling flame . . .
O Heart of Flame! . . .
'Mid dirges of white shapes that plunge and
sway.

THE ROSE OF THE NIGHT

There is an old mystical legend that when a soul among the dead woos a soul among the living, so that both may be reborn as one, the sign is a dark rose, or a rose of flame, in the heart of the night.

The dark rose of thy mouth
  Draw nigher, draw nigher!
Thy breath is the wind of the south,
  A wind of fire,
The wind and the rose and darkness, O Rose
  of my Desire!

Deep silence of the night,
  Husht like a breathless lyre,
Save the sea's thunderous might,
  Dim, menacing, dire,
Silence and wind and sea, they are thee, O
  Rose of my Desire!

As a wind-eddying flame
  Leaping higher and higher,
Thy soul, thy secret name,
  Leaps thro' Death's blazing pyre,
Kiss me, Imperishable Fire, dark Rose, O
  Rose of my Desire!

I-BRASÎL

There's sorrow on the wind, my grief, there's sorrow on the wind,
Old and grey!
I hear it whispering, calling, where the last stars touch the sea,
Where the cloud creeps down the hill, and the leaf shakes on the tree,
There's sorrow on the wind and it's calling low to me
Come away! Come away!

There's sorrow in the world, O wind, there's sorrow in my heart
Night and day:
So why should I not listen to the song you sing to me?
The hill cloud falls away in rain, the leaf whirls from the tree,
And peace may live in I-Brasîl where the last stars touch the sea
Far away, far away.

LOVE AND SORROW

Love said one morn to Sorrow
"Lend me your robe of grey,
And here is mine so gay:
Please borrow,
And each the other be until to-morrow."

At morn they met and parted:
Each had her own again;
But each a new-felt pain;
Broken-hearted,
Love; and Sorrow, broken-hearted.

Love sighed "No more I'll borrow:
I'll never more be glad."
. . . "Can Love be oh so sad,"
Sighed Sorrow:
And so they kissed and parted on that morrow.

But when these lovers parted
God made them seem as one—
"For so My will is done
Among the broken-hearted,"
He said; "O ye who are broken-hearted."

SONG-IN-MY-HEART[1]

Song-in-my-heart, my heart's sorrow, my delight,
I hear a thin whistling as of a high arrow in flight
Or when the wind suddenly leaps, leaving the grass snowy-white:
Is it your voice, Song-in-my-heart, that calls to me to-night?

It is dark here, my Love, my Pulse, my Heart, my Flame:
Dark the night, dark with wind and cloud, the wind without aim
Baffled and blind, the cloud low, broken, dragging, lame,
And a stir in the darkness at the end of the room sighing my name, whispering my name!

Is that the sea calling, or the hounds of the sea, or the wind's hounds

[1] *Oran-a-chridhe*, "Song in my heart," a term of endearment.

Baffling billow on billow, wave into wave,
with trampling sounds
As of herds confusedly crowding gorges?—
or with leaps and bounds
The narwhals in the polar seas crashing be-
tween ice-grown mounds?

Great is that dark noise under the black north
wind
Out on the sea to-night: but still it is—still as
the frost that bind
The stark inland waters in green depths where
icebergs grind—
In this noise of shaking storm in my heart
and this blast sweeping my mind.

MO BRÒN!

(A SONG ON THE WIND)

O come across the grey wild seas,
  Said my heart in pain;
Give me peace, give me peace,
  Said my heart in pain.

This is the song of the Swan
  On the tides of the wind,
The song of the wild Swan
  Time out of mind.

O come across the grey wild seas,
  O give me a token!
My head is on my knees,
  My heart is broken.

This is the song of the Heart
  On the tides of Sorrow:
This is the song of my heart
  To-day and to-morrow.

SORROW

The wrack is lapping in the pools, the sea's lip feels the sand,
Upon the mussel-purple rocks the restless mews are wailing:
The sinuous serpents of the tide are darkly twisting to the land:
The west wind drinks the foam as east she comes a-sailing.

(*A whisper of the secret tides upon another coast,*
The windy headlands of the soul, the lone sands of the mind. . . .
That whisper swells as of a congregating host,
And I am as one frozen, or deaf, or blind.)

O Tide that fills the little pools along the sunset-strand,
That sets the mews a-wailing above the wailing sea,
Bring back, hold out, O flowing Tide, O with a saviour hand
Restore the long-ebbed hopes, some fragment give to me!

(Along the dim and broken coasts the tired
mind knows its own,
By day and night the silent tides are silent
evermore:
Around the headlands of the soul the great
deeps moan,
Or with dull thunders plunge from shore
to shore.)

THE FOUNTS OF SONG

"What is the song I am singing?"
Said the pine-tree to the wave:
"Do you not know the song
You have sung so long
Down in the dim green alleys of the sea,
And where the great blind tides go swinging
Mysteriously,
And where the countless herds of the billows
are hurl'd
On all the wild and lonely beaches of the
world?"

"Ah, Pine-tree," sighed the wave,
"I have no song but what I catch from thee:
Far off I hear thy strain
Of infinite sweet pain
That floats along the lovely phantom land.
I sigh, and murmur it o'er and o'er and o'er,
When 'neath the slow compelling hand
That guides me back and far from the loved
shore,
I wander long

Where never falls the breath of any song,
But only the loud, empty, crashing roar
Of seas swung this way and that for evermore."

"What is the song I am singing?"
Said the poet to the pine:
"Do you not know the song
You have sung so long
Here in the dim green alleys of the woods
Where the wild winds go wandering in all moods,
And whisper often o'er and o'er,
Or in tempestuous clamours roar
Their dark eternal secret evermore?"

"Oh, Poet," said the Pine,
"Thine
Is that song!
Not mine!
I have known it, loved it, long!
Nothing I know of what the wild winds cry
Through dusk and storm and night,
Or prophesy
When tempests whirl us with their awful might.
Only, I know that when
The poet's voice is heard
Among the woods

The infinite pain from out the hearts of men
Is sweeter than the voice of wave or branch
or bird
In these dumb solitudes."

ON A REDBREAST SINGING AT THE GRAVE OF PLATO

(IN THE GROVE OF ACADEME)

The rose of gloaming everywhere!
And through the silence cool and sweet
A song falls through the golden air
And stays my feet—
For there! . . .
This very moment surely I have heard
The sudden, swift, incalculable word
That takes me o'er the foam
Of these empurpling, dim Ionian seas,
That takes me home
To where
Far on an isle of the far Hebrides
Sits on a spray of gorse a little home-sweet bird.

The great white Attic poplars rise,
And down their tremulous stairs I hear
Light airs and delicate sighs.
Even here
Outside this grove of ancient olive-trees,
Close by this trickling murmuring stream,

Was laid long, long ago, men say,
That lordly Prince of Peace
Who loved to wander here from day to day,
Plato, who from this Academe
Sent radiant dreams sublime
Across the troubled seas of time,
Dreams that not yet are passed away,
Nor faded grown, nor grey,
But white, immortal are
As that great star
That yonder hangs above Hymettos' brow.

But now
It is not he, the Dreamer of the Dream,
That holds my thought.
Greece, Plato, and the Academe
Are all forgot:
It is as though I am unloosed by hands:
My heart aches for the grey-green seas
That hold a lonely isle
Far in the Hebrides,
An isle where all day long
The redbreast's song
Goes fluting on the wind o'er lonely sands.

So beautiful, so beautiful
Is Hellas, here.
Divinely clear
The mellow golden air,

Filled, as a rose is full,
Of delicate flame:
And oh the secret tides of thought and dream
That haunt this slow Kephisian stream!
But yet more sweet, more beautiful, more dear
The secret tides of memory and thought
That link me to the far-off shore
For which I long—
Greece, Plato, and the Academe forgot
For a robin's song!

THE BELLS OF YOUTH

The Bells of Youth are ringing in the gateways of the South:
The bannerets of green are now unfurled:
Spring has risen with a laugh, a wild-rose in her mouth,
And is singing, singing, singing thro' the world.

The Bells of Youth are ringing in all the silent places,
The primrose and the celandine are out:
Children run a-laughing with joy upon their faces,
The west wind follows after with a shout.

The Bells of Youth are ringing from the forests to the mountains,
From the meadows to the moorlands, hark their ringing!
Ten thousand thousand splashing rills and fern-dappled fountains
Are flinging wide the Song of Youth, and onward flowing, singing!

The Bells of Youth

The Bells of Youth are ringing in the gate-
ways of the South:
The bannerets of green are now unfurled:
Spring has risen with a laugh, a wild-rose in
her mouth,
And is singing, singing, singing thro' the
world.

SONG OF APPLE-TREES

Song of Apple-trees, honeysweet and murmurous,
Where the swallows flash and shimmer as they thrid the foamwhite maze,
Breaths of far-off Avalon are blown to us, come down to us,
Avalon of the Heart's Desire, Avalon of the Hidden Ways!

Song of Apple-blossom, when the myriad leaves are gleaming
Like undersides of small green waves in foam of shallow seas,
One may dream of Avalon, lie dreaming, dreaming, dreaming,
Till wandering through dim vales of dusk the stars hang in the trees.

Song of Apple-trees, honeysweet and murmurous,
When the night-wind fills the branches with a sound of muffled oars,

Song of Apple-Trees

Breaths of far-off Avalon are blown to us,
come down to us,
Avalon of the Heart's Desire, Avalon of the
Hidden Shores.

RÒSEEN-DHU

Little wild-rose of my heart,
Ròseen-dhu, Ròseen-dhu!
Why must we part,
Ròseen-dhu?
To meet but to part again!
Is it because we are fain
Of the wind and the rain,
Because we are hungry of pain,
Ròseen-dhu?

Little wild-rose of my heart,
Ròseen-dhu, Ròseen-dhu,
Where *I* am, *thou* art,
Ròseen-dhu!
If summer come and go,
If the wild wind blow,
Come rain, come snow,
If the tide ebb, if the tide flow,
Ròseen-dhu!

Little wild-rose of my heart,
Ròseen-dhu, Ròseen-dhu . . .
Time poiseth his shadowy dart,
Ròseen-dhu!

What matter, O Ròseen mochree,
Since each is a wave on the sea—
Since Love is as lightning for thee
And as thunder for me,
Ròseen-dhu!

THE SHREWMOUSE

The creatures with the shining eyes
  That live among the tender grass
See great stars falling down the skies
  And mighty comets pass.

Torches of thought within the mind
  Wave fire upon the dancing streams
Of souls that shake upon them wind
  In rain of falling dreams.

The shrewmouse builds her windy nest
  And laughs amid the corn:
She hath no dreams within her breast:
  God smiled when she was born.

THE LAST FAY

I have wandered where the cuckoo fills
The woodlands with her magic voice:
I have wandered on the brows of hills
Where the last heavenward larks rejoice:
Far I have wandered by the wave,
By shadowy loch and swaying stream,
But never have I found the grave
Of him who made me a wandering Dream.
If I could find that lonely place
And him who lies asleep therein,
I'd bow my head and kiss his face
And sleep and rest and peace would win.

He made me, he who lies asleep
Hidden in some forgotten spot
Where winds sweep and rains weep
And foot of wayfarer cometh not:
He made me, Merlin, ages ago,
He shaped me in an idle hour,
He made a heart of fire to glow
And hid it in an April shower!
For I am but a shower that calls
A thin sweet song of rain, and pass:

Even the wind-whirled leaf that falls
Lingers awhile within the grass,
But I am blown from hill to vale,
From vale to hill like a bird's cry
That shepherds hear a far-off wail
And woodfolk as a drowsy sigh.

And I am tired, whom Merlin made.
I would lie down in the heart of June
And fall asleep in a leafy shade
And wake not till in the Faery Moon
Merlin shall rise our lord and king,
To leave for aye the tribes of Man,
And let the clarion summons ring
The kingdom of the Immortal Clan.
If but in some green place I'd see
An ancient tangled moss-like beard
And half-buried boulder of a knee
I should not flutter away afeared!
With leap of joy, with low glad cry
I'd sink beside the Sleeper fair:
He would not grudge my fading sigh
In the ancient stillness brooding there.

THE DIRGE OF "CLAN SIUBHAIL"

(THE WANDERING FOLK)

Sorrow upon me on the grass and on the wandering road:
My heart is heavy in the morn and heavier still at night.
Sometimes I rest in a quiet place and lay me down my heavy load,
And watch in the dewy valley the coming of light after light,
Watch on the dusky hill and the darkening plain the coming of light after light.

At dawn I am stirring again, and weary of the night:
And all the morn and all the noon I lift my heavy load:
At fall of day I see once more the coming of light after light:
And night is as day and day is as night on the endless road—
Sorrow upon me on the grass and on the wandering road.

THE EXILE

It is not when the seamew cries above the
grey-green foam
Or circling o'er the bracken-fields the flutter-
ing lapwings fly,
Or when above the broom and gale the lark
is in his windy home
That thus I long, and with old longing sigh.

For I am far away now, and now have time
for sighing,
For sighing and for longing, where the grey
houses stand.
In dreams I am a seamew flying, flying, flying
To where my heart is, in my own lost land.

It is when in the crowded streets the rustling
of white willows
And tumbling of a brown hill-water obscure
the noisy ways;
Then is the ache a bitter pain; and to hear
grey-green billows,
Or the hill-wind in a broom-sweet place.

THE SHADOW

" Do you hear the calling, Mary, down by the sea?
Who is it callin', yonder, callin' to me?
Last night a shadow came up to the rowan-tree,
And *Muirnean,* it whispered, *Muirnean, I'm waiting for thee!*

" Do you hear the calling, Mary, down by the shore?
Who is it callin', yonder, callin' sore?
Last night I came in from the rowan an' shut the door,
But some one without kept whisperin' the same thing o'er and o'er.

" Do you hear the calling, Mary, here, close by?
Who is it callin', whisperin', here, so nigh?
Give me my shawl, Mary, an' don't whimper an' cry:
I'm going out into the night, just to look at the sky."

Mary—Mary—Mary—wailed the wind wearily:
Mary—Mary—Mary—wailed the rain in the tree:
One! Two! Three! ticked the clock—*One! Two! Three!*
Out in the darkness rose the calling of the sea.

ORAN-BHROIN [1]

(A crying in the wilderness as of a little child is the symbol of l st love)

When all the West is blowing wild,
Is blowing wild
With tempest wings that fan the fire
Of sunset to one awful pyre,
I hear the crying of a child—
The crying of a little child
When all the West is blowing wild,
Is blowing wild.

The screaming scart, the wailing mew,
The lone curlew,
From shore and moor these voices rise:
The grey wind roams through ashen skies:
The West is all a blood-red hue:
Out of the glistering moorland dew
I hear a child's voice wail and rise
In mournful cries.

When all the West is blowing wild,
Is blowing wild

[1] A song of sorrow.

And shrill and faint along the shore,
By moor, or hill, and o'er and o'er
A child's lament is tost on high . . .
It is a love that cannot die,
A lost love weeping evermore
While all the West is blowing wild,
Is blowing wild.

AT THE COMING OF THE WILD SWANS

By loch and darkening river,
  Above the salt sea-plains,
Across the misty mountains
  Amid the blinding rains,
    In fierce or silent weather
      The wild swans southward fare,
    The wild swans swing together
      Through lonely fields of air,
        Crying *Honk, Honk, Honk,*
        Glugulû, ullalû, glugulû,
          Honk! Honk!

The seamew's lonely laughter
  Flits down the flowing wave,
The green scarts follow after
  The surge where cross-tides rave:
    The sea-duck's mellow wailing
      Floats over sheltered places,
    And southward, southward sailing
      Go all the feathered races. . . .
        When the swans cry *Honk, Honk,*
        Glugulû, ullalû, glugulû,
          Honk! Honk!

At the Coming of the Wild Swans

White spirits from the Northland,
  Grey clan of Storm and Frost,
Wind-swooping to the Southland
  From icy-seas blast-tost. . . .
    Wild clan of sons and daughters,
      A welcome, now you are come
    When all your polar waters
      Are frozen, white, and dumb! . . .
        Crying *Honk, Honk, Honk,*
        Glugulû, ullalû, glugulû,
          Honk! Honk!

THE WEAVER OF SNOW

In Polar noons when the moonshine glimmers,
And the frost-fans whirl,
And whiter than moonlight the ice-flowers grow,
And the lunar rainbow quivers and shimmers,
And the Silent Laughers dance to and fro,
A stooping girl
As pale as pearl
Gathers the frost-flowers where they blow:
And the fleet-foot fairies smile, for they know
The Weaver of Snow.

And she climbs at last to a berg set free,
That drifteth slow:
And she sails to the edge of the world we see:
And waits till the wings of the north wind lean
Like an eagle's wings o'er a lochan of green,
And the pale stars glow
On berg and floe. . . .
Then down on our world with a wild laugh of glee
She empties her lap full of shimmer and sheen.
And that is the way in a dream I have seen
The Weaver of Snow.

A SONG OF DREAMS

One came to me in the night
  And said *Arise!*
I rose, phantom-white;
Far was my flight
To a star shaken with light
  In the heart of the skies.

Through seven spheres I fled,
  Opal and rose and white,
Emerald, violet, red,
Through azure was I led,
And the coronal on my head
  With seven moons was bright.

What wonder that the day
  Swings slowly through slow hours!
My heart leaps when the grey
Husht feet of Night are astray,
And I hear her wild bells play
  On her starry towers.

EASTER

The stars wailed when the reed was born,
And heaven wept at the birth of the thorn:
Joy was pluckt like a flower and torn,
For Time foreshadowed Good-Friday Morn.

But the stars laughed like children free
And heaven was hung with the rainbow's glee
When at Easter Sunday, so fair to see,
Time bowed before Eternity.

WHEN THERE IS PEACE

There is peace on the sea to-night
  Thought the fish in the white wave:
There is peace among the stars to-night
  Thought the sleeper in the grave:

There is peace in my heart to-night
  Sighed Love beneath his breath;
For God dreamed in the silence of His might
  Amid the earthquakes of death.

TIME

I saw a happy Spirit
  That wandered among flowers:
Her crown was a rainbow,
  Her gown was wove of hours.

She turned with sudden laughter,
  I was, but am no more!
And as I followed after
  Time smote me on the brow.

INVOCATION

Written in the Gulf of Lyons during a storm.

Play me a lulling tune, O Flute-Player of Sleep.
Across the twilight bloom of thy purple havens.
Far off a phantom stag on the moon-yellow highlands
Ceases; and, as a shadow, wavers; and passes:
So let Silence seal me and Darkness gather, Piper of Sleep.

Play me a lulling chant, O Anthem-Maker,
Out of the fall of lonely seas, and the wind's sorrow:
Behind are the burning glens of the sunset sky
Where like blown ghosts the seamews wail their desolate sea-dirges:
Make me of these a lulling chant, O Anthem-Maker.

No—no—from nets of silence weave me, O Sigher of Sleep,
A dusky veil ash-grey as the moon-pale moth's grey wing;

Of thicket-stillness woven, and sleep of grass,
and thin evanishing air
Where the tall reed spires breathless—for I
am tired, O Sigher of Sleep,
And long for thy muffled song as of bells on
the wind, and the wind's cry
Falling, and the dim wastes that lie
Beyond the last, low, long, oblivious
sigh.

THE SECRET GATE

From out the dark of sleep I rose, on the
wings of desire:
"Give me the joy of sight," I cried, "O Mas-
ter of Hidden Fire!"
And a Voice said: *Wait*
Till you pass the Gate.

"Give me the joy of sight," I cried, "O Mas-
ter of Hidden Fire!
By the flame in the heart of the soul, grant
my desire!"
And a Voice said: *Wait*
Till you pass the Gate.

I shook the dark with the tremulous beat of
my wings of desire:
"Give me but once the thing I ask, O Master
of Hidden Fire!"
And a Voice said: *Wait!*
You have reached the Gate.

I rose from flame to flame on pinions of desire:
And I heard the voice of the Master of Hid-
den Fire:
Behold the Flaming Gate,
Where Sight doth wait!

The Secret Gate

Like a wandering star I fell through the deeps
of desire,
And back through the portals of sleep the
Master of Hidden Fire
Thundered: *Await*
The opening of the Gate!

But now I pray, now I pray, with passionate
desire:
"Blind me, O blind me, Master of Hidden
Fire,
I supplicate,
Ope not the Gate."

THE MYSTIC'S PRAYER

Lay me to sleep in sheltering flame,
  O Master of the Hidden Fire!
Wash pure my heart, and cleanse for me
  My soul's desire.

In flame of sunrise bathe my mind,
  O Master of the Hidden Fire,
That, when I wake, clear-eyed may be
  My soul's desire.

DRAMAS

To whose editorial hospitality I have so often been indebted; and whose *Undine* following upon *The Idea of Tragedy* shows that the dramatic poet and the critic of imaginative drama can be one.

To

W. L. COURTNEY.

FOREWORD

It is Destiny, then, that is the Protagonist in the Celtic Drama. . . . And it is Destiny, that sombre Demogorgon of the Gael, whose boding breath, whose menace, whose shadow glooms so much of the remote life I know, and hence glooms also this book of interpretations: for pages of life must either be interpretative or merely documentary, and these following pages have for the most part been written as by one who repeats, with curious insistence, a haunting, familiar, yet ever wild and remote air, whose obscure meanings he would fain reiterate, interpret."

(*From the* PROLOGUE *to The Sin-Eater.*)

FOREWORD

In these short dramas I have attempted to give voice to two elemental emotions, the emotion of the inevitableness of destiny and the emotion of tragical loveliness. One does not need to know the story of Midir and Etain, of Concobar and Deirdrê, of Deirdrê and the Sons of Usna, in order to know the mystery and the silent arrivals of destiny, or to know the emotion of sorrow at the passage of beauty: as one does not need to know the story of *Iphigenia in Aulis* in order to know the emotion of indignation at kingly guile or the emotion of pity for the betrayed: as one does not need to know the story of the *Crowned Hippolytos* in order to know the emotion of tragical suspense, as when Phædra's love for the son of her husband is like a leaf on the wind; or in order to know the emotion of bewildered futility, as when Theseus curses and banishes his innocent son and persuades to him the doom of Poseidon. For these emotions are not the properties of drama, which is but a fowler snaring them in a net. These

deep elementals are the obscure Chorus which plays upon the silent flutes, upon the nerves wherein the soul sits enmeshed. They have their own savage or divine energy, and the man of the woods and the dark girl of the canebrakes know them with the same bowed suspense or uplifted lamentation or joy as do the men and women who have great names and to whom the lords of the imagination have given immortality.

Many kings have desired, and the gods forbidden. Concobar has but lain down where Cæsars have fallen and Pharaohs closed imperial eyes, and many satraps and many tyrants have bent before the wind. All old men who in strength and passion rise up against the bitterness of destiny are the kindred of Lear: those who have kept love as the crown of years, and seen it go from them like a wreath of sand, are of the kin of Concobar. There is not one Lear only, or one Concobar, in the vast stage of life: but a multitude of men who ask, in the dark hour of the Winged Destiny, *Am I in truth a king?* or who, incredulous, whisper *Deirdrê is dead, Deirdrê the beautiful is dead, is dead.*

The tradition of accursed families is not the fantasy of one dramatist or of one country or of one time. The *Oresteia* of Aischylos is no

more than a tragic fugue wherein one hears the cries of uncountable threnodies. The doom of the clan of Usna is not less veiled in terror and perpetuated in fatality than the doom of the Atreidai: and even "The Fall of the House of Usher" is but a single note of the same ancient mystery over which Sophocles brooded in the lamentations which eddy like mournful winds around the House of Labdacus.

Whether the poet turn to the tragedy of the Theban dynasty wherein Laios and Iokaste and Oidipus move like children of fire in a wood doomed to flames; or to the tragedy of the Achaian dynasty, wherein Pelops and Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaos, Helen and Iphigenia, Klytaemnestra prophesying and the prophet Kalchas, are like shadowy figures, crowned with terror and beauty, on the verge of a dark sea where the menace of an obscure wind is continually heard beyond the enchanted shore; or to the tragedy of Lear weeping, where all kingship seems as a crown left in the desert to become the spoil of the adder or a pillow for wandering dust; or to the Celtic tragedy of the House of Fionn, where Dermid and Grania, where Oisin and Malveen, are like the winds and the waters, the rains and the lamentations of the hills; or to

that other and less familiar Gaelic tragedy of the House of Usna, where an old king knows madness because of garnered love spilt and wasted, and where a lamp of deathless beauty shines like a beacon, and where heroes die as leaves fall, and where a wind of prophesying is like the sound of dark birds flying over dark trees in the darkness of forgotten woods: —whether one turn to these, or to the doom of the House of Malatesta, or to the doom of the House of Macbeth, or to the doom of the House of Ravenswood, one turns in vain if he be blind and deaf to the same elemental forces as they move their eternal ichor through the blood that has to-day's warmth in it, that are the same powers though they be known of the obscure and the silent, and are committed like wandering flame to the torch of a ballad as well as to the starry march of the compelling words of genius; are of the same dominion, though that be in the shaken hearts of islesfolk and mountaineers, and not with kings in Mykênai, or by the thrones of Tamburlaine and Aurungzebe, or with great lords and broken nobles and thanes.

But the poet, the dramatist, is not able—is not yet able—to express in beauty and convey in symbol the visible energy of these emotions without resort to the artifice of men and

women set in array, with harmonious and arbitrary speech given to them, and a background of illusion made unreal by being made emphatic.

If one were to express the passion of remorse under the signal of a Voice lamenting, or the passion of tears under the signal of a Cry, and be content to give no name to these protagonists and to deny them the background of history or legend: and were to unite them in the sequence of significant and essential things which is drama in action, but in a sequence of suggestion and symbol rather than of statement and pageant: he would be told that he had mistaken the method of music passing into drama for the method of verbal illusion passing into drama.

And, while this is so, it cannot be gainsaid that he must not seek to disengage from the creature of his imagination these old allies, the intimate name and the familiar circumstance. It may be true that a Voice and a Cry may suffice, not as choric echo or emphasis, but as protagonists in a drama where the passions and energies and unveiled emotions are unloosed, and elemental strives with elemental, till Love and Terror may in very weariness lie down together, and Death and Sorrow and Wrath and Lamentation disclose their own

august nakedness, beings standing apart from the mortal wrappings of words and action, of silence and sound and colour and shape, to which our mind compels them. But that is too subtle a dream for realisation to seem possible yet. It is too subtle perhaps even as the insubstantial phantom of a dream, save for those who, hungering after the wild honey of the mind and thirsting for the remoter springs, foresee a time when the imagination shall lay aside words and pigments and clay, as raiment needless during the festivals of the spirit, and express itself in the thoughts which inhabit words—as light inhabits water or as greenness inhabits grass; and in the colours which inhabit pigments, as wild-roses and dew-wet laburnum and white and purple iris gathered from a June morning and hidden in earthenware jars; and in the perpetual and protean energy of Form which, tranced and unique, dreams in clay or sleeps in marble or ivory.

But so long as the imagination dwells in this old convention which imposes upon us the use of events that chime to the bells of the past, and the use of names which are at once congruous and traditional . . . in this convention of episode and phrase in the concert of action and suspense . . . it will be well

ever and again to turn to those ancestral themes past which so many generations have slipt like sea-going winds over pastures, and upon which the thoughts of many minds have fallen in secret dews. I do not say, for I do not so think, that there might not be drama as moving whether it deal with the event of to-day and the accent of the hour as with a remote accent recovered and with remote event. Some of the dramas of Browning, some of the finer French dramas, some of the short plays of Mr. Yeats and others, are to the point. But, to many minds, there must always be a supreme attraction in great themes of drama as familiar to us as the tales of faerie and wonder to the mind of childhood. The mind, however, need not be bondager to formal tradition. I know one who can evoke modern dramatic scenes by the mere iterance of the great musical names of the imagination . . . Menelaos, Helen, Klytaemnestra, Andromachê, Kassandra, Orestes, blind Oidipus, Elektra, Kreusa, and the like. This is not because these names are in themselves esoteric symbols, or are built of letters of revelation as the fabled tower of Ys was built of evocatory letters made of wind and water, of brownness of earth, of greenness of grass, and of dew, all of which the druids held in the hollows of

the five vowels. My friend has not seen any representation of the *Agamemnon* or the *Choephoroi,* of *Aias* or *Oidipus* at *Kolonos,* of *Elektra* or *Ion,* or indeed of any Greek play. But he knows the story of every name mentioned in each of the dramas of the three kings of Greek Tragedy. So, as he says, why should he go out to see a trivial play of trivial people animated by trivial emotions against a background of trivial circumstance, when he can sit before his fire and see Elektra and Orestes standing appalled before the dead body of Klytaemnestra, listening if the coming steps are the steps of murdered Aigisthos, and cowering when they see the pale immortal faces of the Dioskoroi: or see Oidipus, that proud king, when he hears the first terrible whisper of destiny from the lips of the prophet Teiresias, or when, blind and abased, he lies in the dust, with Iokaste, wife and queen and revealed mother, already 'a silent fruit on the tree of death,' while, beyond, the Chorus raves: or when, as in *Aias* (as our Cuchulain fighting the waves with drawn sword and foam on his lips, or Concobar in the legendary tale that on the day of the Crucifixion he ran into the woods lopping great branches from the trees and calling 'A king is fallen to-day, an innocent king is slain, a great king is fallen!')

the mad prince runs among a herd of cattle and slaughters the lowing bulls, thinking them to be Agamemnon and Menelaos—or, later, when he stands subtly smiling as though acquiescing to the fair words of Tekmessa, and then with sidelong eyes goes furtively to the solitary place where he may fall upon his sword? Or, again, he may see Klytaemnestra entering the doorway, with Elektra and Orestes waiting with beating hearts, not as either Euripides or Aischylos has revealed to us; or may see Oidipus staring with sudden scornful wrath at Teiresias, not as either Aischylos or Sophocles has revealed to us; but a Klytaemnestra, an Elektra, an Orestes, an Oidipus, a Teiresias, as revealed to his own vision that is of to-day, shaped from the mould that moulds the spirit of to-day and coloured with the colour of to-day's mind. And here, he says, is his delight. "For I do not live only in the past, but in the present, in these dramas of the mind. The names stand for the elemental passions, and I can come to them through my own gates of to-day as well as through the ancient portals of Aischylos or Sophocles or Euripides: and for background I prefer the flame-light and the sound of the wind to any of the crude illusions of stagecraft."

It is no doubt in this attitude that Racine,

so French in the accent of his classical genius, looked at the old drama which was his inspiration: that Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Bridges, so English in the accent of their genius, have looked at it; that Echegaray, in Spain, looked at it before he produced his troubled modern *Elektra* which is so remote in shapen thought and coloured semblance from the colour and idea of its prototype; that Gabriele D'Annunzio looked at it before he became obsessed with the old terrible idea of the tangled feet of Destiny, so that a tuft of grass might withhold or a breath from stirred dust empoison, and wrote that most perturbing of all modern dramas, *La Città Morta.*

It concurs, then, that there is no inherent reason why a poet of to-day should not overtake the same themes as Aischylos overtook from Phrynicus, and Sophocles from Aischylos, and Euripides from all three, and Philoclês and Agathôn and Xenoclês indiscriminately. The difficulty is not in the remoteness of the theme, still less in the essential substance. It is in the mistaken idea that the ancient formal method is inevitable, and in the mistaken idea that a theme sustained on essential and elemental things and therefore independent of unique circumstance can be exhausted by the flashing upon it of one great light. Kassandra

and Helen and Iphigenia . . . they live: they are not dead. But, to approach them, to come face to face with them, that is not the reward of the most eager mind, or of the most uplifted desire: it is the reward only of genius akin in quality at least with that of those great ones of old who, like drifting Pharos, flashed across the dark seas of antiquity a dazzling illumination on this lifted wave called Helen, on that lifted wave called Andromachê, on these long rolling billows called Agamemnon or Aias or Orestes. It is not the themes that have receded but the imaginations that have quailed.

Merely to parody the Greek tragedians, by taking a great theme and putting one's presumption and weakness beside it—that is another thing altogether. It is difficult after Shelley and Robert Browning, after Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Robert Bridges, to say that no modern English poet has achieved a play with a Greek heart . . . no play written as a nineteenth century Sophocles or Euripides or Agathôn would have written it. Even on *Prometheus Unbound* and *Atalanta in Calydon,* even on *Erechtheus,* the Gothic genius of the North has laid a touch as delicate as frost, as durable as the finger of primeval fire on the brows of the immemorial rock. Perhaps the

plays of Mr. Bridges are more truly classical than any modern drama since Racine. But their flame is flame seen in a mirror: we see the glow, we are intellectually warmed by it, but we do not feel it . . . our minds only, not our hearts that should burn, our nerves that should thrill, respond.

The reason, I do not doubt, is mainly a physical rather than an intellectual difficulty. It is the indwelling difficulty. It is the indwelling spirit and not the magnetic mind that is wayward and eager to evade the compelling wand of the imagination. For the spirit is not under the spell of tradition. It wishes to go its own way. Tradition says, if you would write of the slaying of Klytaemnestra you must present a recognisable Elektra and a recognisable Orestes, and Dioskoroi recognisable as Dioskoroi against a recognisable background: but to the spirit Elektra and Orestes are simply abstract terms of the theatre of the imagination, the Dioskoroi are august powers, winnowers of fate, and the old Greek background is but a remembered semblance of a living stage that is not to-day what it was yesterday or shall be to-morrow, and yet is ever in essentials the same.

There is not one of the Greek dramas which might not in spiritual identity be achieved to-

day by genius that, with equality of power, could perceive the intransiency of the essential and immortal factors in the life of the imagination and the mutability of what is accidental in time and circumstance.

We are, I believe, turning toward a new theatre. The theatre of Ibsen, and all it stands for, is become outworn as a compelling influence. Its inherent tendency to demonstrate intellectually from a series of incontrovertible material facts is not adequate for those who would see in the drama the means to demonstrate symbolically from a sequence of intuitive perception. A subtle French critic, writing of the theatre of Ibsen, appreciates it as a theatre more negative than positive, more revolutionary than foundational, more intellectual than religious. "À ce théâtre amer et sec," he adds, "l'âme moderne ne peut étancher toutes ses soifs d'infini et d'absolu."

I think that, there, the right thing is said, as well as the significant indication given. "More intellectual than religious": that is, more congruous with the method of the mirror that gathers and reveals certain facets of the spirit than with the spirit who as in a glass darkly looks into the mirror. "More intellectual than religious": that is, more persuaded

by the sight that reveals the visible than by the vision that perceives what materially is not visible. "At this bitter and dry theatre of the intellect, the modern soul cannot quench its thirst for the infinite and absolute": and that is the reason, alone adequate, why to-day the minds of men are turning to a new drama, wherein thoughts and ideas and intuitions shall play a more significant part than the acted similitudes of the lesser emotions that are not so much the incalculable life of the soul as the conditioned energies of the body. The Psychic Drama shall not be less nervous; but the emotional energy shall be along the nerves of the spirit, which sees beneath and above and beyond, rather than merely along the nerves of material life, which sees only that which is in the line of sight.

And as I have written elsewhere, it may well be that, in a day of outworn conventions, many of us are ready to turn gladly from the scenic illusions of the stage carpenter and the palpable illusions of the playwright, to the ever-new illlusions of the dreaming mind, woven in a new intense dramatic reality against "imagined tapestries"

. . . *dream-coloured dramas of the mind*
Best seen against imagined tapestries . . .

against revealing shadows and tragic glooms and radiances as real, and as near, as the crude symbols of painted boards and stereotyped phrase in which we still have a receding pleasure.

I think the profoundest utterance I know, witnessing to the fundamentally psychical nature of the drama, is a phrase of Chateaubriand which I came upon recently in Book V of his *Mémoires* . . . "to recover the desert I took refuge in the theatre." The whole effort of a civilisation become anæmic and disillusioned must be to "recover the desert." That is a central truth, perceived now of many who are still the few. This great writer knew that in the *théâtre de l'âme* lay the subtlest and most searching means for the imagination to compel reality to dreams, to compel actuality to vision, to compel to the symbolic congregation of words the bewildered throng of wandering and illusive thoughts and ideas. By "the desert" he meant that wilderness, that actual or symbolic solitude, to which the creative imagination goes as the curlew to the wastes or as the mew to foam and wind.

Other writers speak of "nature" and "solitude" as though regarding them as sanctuaries where the passions may, like the wild falcons,

cover their faces with their wings, and be still. Chateaubriand was of those few who look upon the solitudes of nature as enchanted lands, where terror walks with beauty, and where dreams start affrighted from quiet pools because the shadow of invisible fear falls past their shadowy hair and they see the phantom slipping from depth to depth as a wind-eddy from leaf to leaf. He was of those who looked upon solitude as, of old, anchorites looked upon waste places where the vulture had her eyrie and the hyena wailed and in desolate twilights the lioness filled the dark with the hunger of her young. "Be upon your guard against solitude: the great passions are solitary, and to transport them to the desert is to restore them to their triumph."

But I have wandered from the narrower path on which I set out. Elsewhere, I hope to express more adequately what here I have cursorily outlined, and, also tentatively to illustrate the Psychic Drama as thus indicated. It is because my mind is occupied with many problems of a new drama that I have thus burdened a short play, remembered as it were from some vast unwritten ancient drama, with so lengthy a preface. However, it may stand as the statement of a movement of return on

the part of individual thought, that I believe to be indicative of a movement of return on the part of modern thought, to the instinct of organic unity and . . . in the deep sense of the term . . . to a religious inspiration.

F. M.

THE IMMORTAL HOUR

A DRAMA

NOTE

The Immortal Hour is founded on the ancient Celtic legend of Midir and Etain (or Edane). I have no doubt that the legend, though only honey for the later Gaelic poets, had originally a deep significance, and that the Wooing to the Otherworld . . . i.e., to the Gaelic *Tir na 'n Og*, the Land of Youth, of the Ever Living, of Love, the Land of Heart's Desire . . . of the beautiful woman Etain, wife of King Eochaidh, symbolised another wooing and another mystery than that alone of the man for the woman. It symbolised, I think, the winning of life back to the world after an enforced thraldom: the renewal of Spring: in other words, Etain is a Gaelic Eurydice, Midir a Gaelic Orpheus who penetrated the dismal realm of Eochaidh, and Eochaidh but a humanised Gaelic Dis. It is not Persephone, gathering flowers on Enna, whom legend remembers here, but the not less beautiful love of Apollo's son, slain by the treacherous earth in the guise of a grass-hid asp as she flees from her pursuer: nor is there word

of Demeter, nor yet of Aristæus. To the Gaelic mind, remembering what it had dreamed in the Vale of Tempe (or in Asian valleys, long before the Song-Charmer had a Greek muse for mother and a birthright in Hellas) the myths of Persephone and Eurydice might well be identified, so that Orpheus sought each or both-in-one, in the gloomy underworld. And the tale suffered no more than a sea-change when, by the sundown shores, it showed Eurydice-Persephone as Etain being wooed back to sunshine and glad life by the longing passion of Orpheus as Midir. For in the Gaelic mythology, Midir, too, is a son of light, a servant of song, a son of Apollo, being of the divine race of Oengus the Sun-God, Lord of Life and Death. By his symbol of the dew he is also the Restorer, the Reviver.

Of Dalua I can say but a word here.[1] He is the Amadan-Dhu, or Dark Fool, the Faery Fool, whose touch is madness or death for any mortal: whose falling shadow even causes bewilderment and forgetfulness. The Fool is

[1] The name *Dalua* and *Etain* should be pronounced *Da-lōō-ă*, and *Éh-tain* (short, as in *satin*). The name of Eochaidh, who later wins Etain for a time, is pronounced *Yōchay*, and that of Midir, *Mid'-eer* (short, as in mid-day).

at once an elder and dreadful god, a mysterious and potent spirit, avoided even of the proud immortal folk themselves: and an abstraction, "the shadow of pale hopes, forgotten dreams, and madness of men's minds." He is, too, to my imagining, madness incorporate as a living force. In several of my writings this dark presence intervenes as a shadow . . . sometimes without being named, or as an elemental force, as in the evil music of Gloom Achanna in the tale called "The Dan-Nan-Ron," sometimes as a spirit of evil, as in "Dalua," the opening tale in *The Dominion of Dreams.*

The Black Hawk (or Eagle) alluded to in first "direction" preceding text is the *Iolair Dhu,* which on the first day of the world launched itself into the darkness and has never yet caught up with the dawn, though its rising or sinking shadow may be seen over the edge of dark at the night-dusk or morning twilight. It should be added that with the ancient Gaels (and with the few to-day who have not forgotten or do not disdain the old wisdom) the Hidden People (the *Sidhe* or *Shee;* or *Shee'an* or *Sheechun* of the Isles) were great and potent, not small and insignificant beings. "Mab" long ago was the terrible "dark" queen, Maive (*Medb, Medbh,*

Mabh): and the still more ancient Puck was not a frolicsome spirit, but a shadowy and dreadful Power.

Students of Celtic mythology will be familiar with the legend of the love of Etain or Edane (herself half divine of race), wife of Eochaidh, the High King, for a mysterious stranger who came to the King's Dûn, and played chess with the King, and won Etain away with him, he being Midir, a King in the Otherworld. Some may look upon Midir as another Orpheus, and upon Etain as a Eurydice with the significance of Proserpine: others may see also in Etain, what I see, and would convey in *The Immortal Hour,* a symbol of the wayward but home-wandering soul; and in Midir, a symbol of the Spirit; and in Eochaidh, a symbol of the mundane life, of mortal love. Others will see only the sweet vanity of the phosphorescent play of the mythopœic Gaelic mind, or indeed not even this, but only the natural dreaming of the Gaelic imagination, ever in love with fantasy and with beauty in fantasy. But, lest the old and the new be confused, this should be added: . . . That Eochaidh finds Etain in the way he does, and that Dalua comes and goes between Etain and Eochaidh as he comes and goes, and the meaning that lies in the obscure love of Dalua, and the bewildered love of

Etain, and the mortal love of Eochaidh, and the immortal love of Midir . . . this is new, perhaps: though what seems new may be the old become transparent only, the old in turn being often the new seen in reverse . . . as one may for the first time see a star in a deep water that has already immemorially mirrored it. Nor has Dalua part or mention in the antique legend. Like other ancient things, this divinity hath come secretly upon us in a forgetful time, new and strange and terrible, though his unremembered shadow crossed our way when first we set out on our long travel, in the youth of the world.

F. M.

ACT I

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EOCHAIDH. *High King of Ireland.*
ETAIN. *A Lost Princess, afterwards Eochaidh's Queen.*
MIDIR. *A Prince of the Hidden People.*
DALUA. *The Amadan-Dhu.*
Two Peasants, Manus *and* Maive, *and Harpers, Warriors, etc.*

ACT I

A forest glade at the rising of the moon. In the background is the hazel-shadowed pool of a wide waste of water. As the moonshine falls upon an ancient oak to the right, the tall figure of DALUA *is seen leaning against the bole. He is clad in black, with a small black cap from which hangs a black hawk's feather.*

DALUA

[*Slowly coming out of the shadow*

By dim moon-glimmering coasts and dim grey wastes
Of thistle-gathered shingle, and sea-murmuring woods
Trod once but now untrod . . . under grey skies
That had the grey wave sighing in their sails,
And in their drooping sails the grey sea-ebb,
And with the grey wind wailing evermore
Blowing the dun leaf from the blackening trees,
I have travelled from one darkness to another.

VOICES IN THE WOOD

Though you have travelled from one darkness
to another
Following the dun leaf from the blackening
trees
That the grey wind harries, and have trodden
the woods
Where the grey-hooded crows that once were
men
Gather in multitude from the long grey wastes
Of thistled shingle by sea-murmurous coasts,
Yet you have come no further than a rood,
A little rood of ground in a circle woven.

DALUA

My lips have lost the salt of the driven foam,
Howbeit I hear no more the long dull roar,
Of the long grey beaches of the Hebrides.

VOICES

Behind the little windless leaves of the wood
The sea-wastes of the wind-worn Hebrides,
With thunderous crashes falling wave on
wave,
Are but the troubled sighs of a great silence.

DALUA

To the world's end I have come, to the
world's end.

VOICES

You have come but a little way who think so far
The long uncounted leagues to the world's end:
And now you are mazed because you stand at the edge
Where the last tangled slope leans over the abyss.

DALUA

You know not who I am, sombre and ancient voices.

[*Silence*

And if I tread the long, continuous way
Within a narrow round, not thinking it long,
And fare a single hour thinking it many days,
I am not first or last of the Immortal Clan,
For whom the long ways of the world are brief
And the short ways heavy with unimagined time.

VOICES IN THE WOOD

There is no first or last, or any end.

DALUA

I have come hither, led by dreams and visions,
And know not why I come, and to what end,
And wherefore, mid the noise of chariot wheels
Where the swung world roars down the starry ways,
The Voice I know and dread was one with me
As the uplifted grain and wind are one.

VOICES

Above you is the light of a wandering star . . .
O Son of the Wandering Star, we know you now!

DALUA

Like great black birds the demons haunt the woods . . .
Hail, ye unknown who know me! . . .

A VOICE

Hail, Son of Shadow!

VOICES

Hail, Brother of the strong, immortal gods,
And of the gods who have passed into a sleep
In sandless hollows of forgotten hills,
And of the homeless, sad, bewildered gods
Who as grey wandering mists lickt up of the wind
Pass slowly in the dull unfriendly light
Of the cold, curious eyes of envious men. . . .

OTHER VOICES

. . . . . Ai! Ai!
Who yet have that which gives their mortal clay
A light and a power and a wonder that none has
Of all the Clans of the Shee, save only those who are not sprung of Orchil and of Kail,
The mother and father of the earth-wrought folk
Greater than men, but less than Orchil and Kail,
As they in turn are less than sky-set Lu,
Or Oengus who is keeper of the four great keys . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than sky-set Lu who leads the hosts of the stars . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Dagda, Lord of Thunder and of Silence,
And Ana, the ancient Mother of the gods. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Mánan of the innumerable waters. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than moon-crown'd Brigid of the undying flame. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Midir of the Dew and the Evening Star. . . .

OTHER VOICES

Than Oengus, keeper of the East: of Birth, of Song;
The keeper of the South: of Passion, and of War;
The keeper of the West: of Sorrow, of Dreams;
The keeper of the North: of Death, of Life.

DALUA

Yet one more ancient even than the god of the sun,
Than flame-haired Oengus, lord of Love and Death,
Holds the last dreadful key . . . Oblivion.

VOICES

Dim ages that are dust are but the loosened laughters
Spilt in the youth of Oengus the Ever-Young!

DALUA

I am old, more old, more ancient than the gods,
For I am son of Shadow, eldest god
Who dreamed the passionate and terrible dreams
We have called Fire and Light, Water and Wind,
Air, Darkness, Death, Change, and Decay, and Birth
And all the infinite bitter range that is.

A VOICE

Brother and kin to all the twilit gods,
Living, forgot, long dead: sad Shadow of pale hopes,
Forgotten dreams, and madness of men's minds:
Outcast among the gods, and called the Fool,
Yet dreaded even by those immortal eyes
Because thy fateful touch can wreck the mind,
Or lay a frost of silence on the heart:
Dalua, hail! . . .

DALUA

I am but what I am.
I am no thirsty evil lapping life.
[*Loud laughters from the wood*
Laugh not, ye outcasts of the invisible world,
For Lu and Oengus laugh not, nor the gods
Safe set above the perishable stars.
[*Silence*
They laugh not, nor any in the high celestial house.
Their proud immortal eyes grow dim and clouded
When as a morning shadow I am gathered
Into their holy light, for well they know
The dreadful finger of the Nameless One,

That moves as a shadow falls. For I Dalua
Am yet the blown leaf of the unknown
powers.

VOICES

[*Tumultuously*

We too are the blown leaves of the unseen
powers.

DALUA

Demons and Dreams and Shadows, and all ye
Invisible folk who haunt the darkling ways,
I am grown weary, who have stooped and lain
Over the green edge o' the shaken world
And seen beneath the whirling maze of stars
Infinite gulfs of silence, and the obscure
Abysmal wastes where Time hath never trod.

VOICES

We too are weary: we are Weariness.

DALUA

[*Listening intently*

Voices of shadowy things, be still! I hear
The feet of one who wanders through the
wood.

VOICES

We who are the children of the broken way,
The wandered wind, the idle wave, blown leaves,
The wild distempered hour and swirling dust,
Hail thee, Dalua, Herdsman of fallen stars,
Shepherd of Shadows! Lord of the Hidden Way!

DALUA

[*Going back to the oak*

Voices be still! The woods are suddenly troubled.
I hear the footfall of predestined things.

[*Enter* ETAIN, *in a coiled robe of pale green, with mistletoe intertwined in her long, dark, unloosened hair. She comes slowly forward, and stands silent, looking at the moonshine on the water.*

ETAIN

[*Singing to a slow monotonous air*

Fair is the moonlight
And fair the wood,
But not so fair
As the place I come from.

Why did I leave it,
The beautiful country,
Where Death is only
A drifting Shadow?

O face of Love,
Of Dream and Longing,
There is sorrow upon me
That I am here.

I will go back
To the Country of the Young,
And see again
The lances of the Shee

As they keep hosting
With laughing cries
In pale places
Under the moon.

[ETAIN *turns, and walks slowly forward. She starts as she hears a peculiar cry from the wood*

ETAIN

None made that cry who has not known the Shee.

DALUA

[*Coming forward and bowing low with fantastic grace*

Hail, daughter of kings, and star among the dreams
Which are the lives and souls of whom have won
The Country of the Young!

ETAIN

I know you not:
But though I have not seen your face before,
I think you are of those who have not kept
The bitter honey of mortality,
But are among the deathless folk who dwell
In hollow hills, or isles far off, or where
Flatheanas lies, or cold Ifurin is.

DALUA

I have come far, led here by dreams and visions.

ETAIN

By dreams and visions led I too have come
But know not whence or by what devious way,
Nor to what end I am come through these dim woods
To this grey lonely loch.

DALUA

[*Touching her lightly with the shadow of his hand*

Have you forgot
The delicate smiling land beneath the arcs
Which day and night and momently are wove
Between its peaceful shores and the vast gulf
Of dreadful silence and the unpathwayed dark?

ETAIN

If somewhat I remember, more is lost.
Have I come here to meet with you, fair sir,
Whose name I do not know, whose face is strange?

DALUA

Can you remember. . . .

ETAIN

I have forgotten all . . .
I can remember nothing: no, not this
The little song I sang ev'n now, or what sweet thought,
What ache of longing lay behind the song.
All is forgot. And this has come to me
The wind-way of the leaf. But now my thoughts

Ran leaping through the green ways of my mind
Like fawns at play: but now I know no more
That this: that I am Etain White o' the Wave,
Etain come hither from the lovely land
Where the immortal Shee fill up their lives
As flowers with honey brewed of summer airs,
Flame of the sun, dawn-rains, and evening dews.

DALUA

[*Sombrely*

How knew you not that once, where the unsetting moon
The grassy elf mounds fills with drowsy gold,
I kissed your shadowy lips beneath the thorn
Heavy with old foam of changeless blossom?

ETAIN

[*Leaning forward and looking into his face*

You loved me once? I have no memory
Of this: if once you loved me, have you lost
The subtle breath of love, the sudden fire?
For you are cold as are your shadowy eyes.

DALUA

[*Unstirring*

When, at the last, amid the o'erwearied Shee—
Weary of long delight and deathless joys—
One you shall love may fade before your eyes,
Before your eyes may fade, and be as mist
Caught in the sunny hollow of Lu's hand,
Lord of the Day. . . .

ETAIN

[*Eagerly, with her left hand pressed against her heart*

What then?

DALUA

It may be then, white dove,
Your eyes may dwell on one on whom falls not
The first chill breath blown from the Unknown Land,
Of which the tender poets of the Shee
Sing in the dewy eves when the wild deer
Are milked, and 'neath the evening-star moths rise
Grey-gold against a wave-uplifted moon.

ETAIN

Well?

DALUA

Then I, Dalua, in that fateful hour,
Shall know the star-song of supreme desire,
And placing hand upon the perfect fruit
Shall taste and die. . . .

[*A pause*

. . . or, if I do not die,
Shall know the sweet fruit mine, then see it slip
Down through dim branches into the abyss
Where all sweet fruit that is, the souls of men,
The joyous Shee, old gods, all beautiful words,
Song, music, dreams, desires, shall in the end
Sway like blown moths against the rosewhite flame
That is the fiery plume upon the brows
Of Him called Silence.

ETAIN

I do not understand:
Your love shall fall about me like sweet rain
In drouth of death: so much I hear and know:
But how can death o'ertake the immortal folk
With whom I dwell? And if you love me thus,

Why is there neither word nor smile nor glance
Of love, nor any little sign that love
Shakes like a windy reed within your heart?

DALUA

[*Sombrely*

I am Dalua.

ETAIN

I have heard lips whisper
Of one Dalua, but with sucked-in breath,
As though the lips were fearful of the word.
No more than this I know, no more recall.

DALUA

I cannot give you word of love, or kiss,
Sweet love, for in my fatal breath there lies
The subtle air of madness: from my hand
Death shoots an arrowy tongue, if I but touch
The unsuspecting clay with bitter heed,
With hate darkling as the swift winter hail,
Or sudden malice such as lifts and falls
A dreadful shadow of ill within my mind.
Nor could I if I would. We are sheep led
By an unknown Shepherd, we who are the Shee,
For all we dream we are as gods, and far
Upgathered from the little woes of men.

ETAIN

Then why this meeting, here in this old wood,
By moonlight, by this melancholy water?

DALUA

I knew not: now I know. A king of men
Has wooed the Immortal Hour. He seeks to know
The joy that is more great than joy
The beauty of the old green earth can give.
He has known dreams, and because bitter dreams
Have sweeter been than honey, he has sought
The open road that lies mid shadowy things.
He hath sought and found and called upon the Shee
To lead his love to one more beautiful
Than any mortal maid, so fair that he
Shall know a joy beyond all mortal joy,
And stand silent and rapt beside the gate,
The rainbow gate of her whom none may find,
The Beauty of all Beauty.

ETAIN

Can this be?

DALUA

Nay, but he doth not know the end. There is
But one way to that Gate: it is not Love
Aflame with all desire, but Love at peace.

ETAIN

Who is this poet, this king?

DALUA

Led here by dreams,
By dreams and visions led as you and I,
His feet are nearing us. When you are won
By love and adoration, Star of dreams,
And take sweet mortal clay, and have forgot
The love-sweet whisper of the King of The Shee,
And, even as now, hear Midir's name unmov'd;
When you are won thus, Etain, and none know,
Not any of your kindred, whence unknown
As all unknowing you have come, for you
The wayward thistledown of fate shall blow
On the same idle wind—the doom of him
Who blindfold seeks you.

ETAIN

But he may not love?

DALUA

Yes, he shall love. Upon him I shall lay
My touch, the touch of him men dread and call
The Amadan-Dhu, the Dark One, Fairy Fool.
He shall have madness even as he wills,
And think it wisdom. I shall be his thought—
A dream within a dream, the flame wherein
The white moths of his thought shall rise and die.

[*A blast of a horn is heard*

DALUA

[*Abruptly*

FAREWELL.

[*Touches her lightly with the shadow of his hand, and whispers in her ear*

Now go. The huntsman's lodge is near.
I have told all that need be told, and given
Bewilderment and dreams, but dreams that are
The fruit of that sweet clay of which I spoke.

[ETAIN *slowly goes, putting her hand to her head bewilderedly. Before she passes into and out of sight in the wood, she sings plaintively*

I would go back
To the Country of the Young,
And see again
The lances of the Shee,

As they keep their hosting
With laughing cries
In pale places
Under the moon.

SCENE II.—*The same.*

[DALUA *stands, waiting the coming of* EOCHAIDH *the king. The king is clad in a leathern hunting dress, with a cleft helmet surmounted by a dragon in pale findruiney*

EOCHAIDH

[*Stopping abruptly*

Sir, I am glad. I had not thought to see
One here.

DALUA

[*Taking off his cap, and sweeping it low*

The king is welcome here.

EOCHAIDH

The king?
How know you that the king is here? Far off
The war-horns bray about my threatened
Dûn.
None knows that I am here.

DALUA

And why, O king?

EOCHAIDH

For I am weary of wars and idle strife,
Who have no joy in all these little things
Men break their lives upon. But in my dreams,
In dreams I have seen that which climbs the
stars
And sings upon me through my lonely hours
And will not let me be.

DALUA

What song is that?

EOCHAIDH

The song . . . but who is he who knows the
king
Here in this dim, remote, forgotten wood,
Where led by dreams and visions I have come?

DALUA

Those led by dreams shall be misled, O king!

EOCHAIDH

You are no druid: no knight in arms: none
Whom I have seen.

DALUA

I have known camps of men,
The minds and souls of men, and I have heard
Eochaidh the king sighing out his soul in sighs.

EOCHAIDH

Tell me your name.

DALUA

I am called Dalua.

EOCHAIDH

[*Ponderingly*

I have not heard that name, and yet in dreams
I have known one who waved a shadowy plume
And smiling said, "I am Dalua." Speak:
Are you this same Dalua?

DALUA

I have come
To this lone wood and to this lonely mere
To drink from out the Fountain of all dreams,
The Shadowy Fount of Beauty.

EOCHAIDH

[*Eagerly*

At last!
The Fount of Beauty, Fountain of all dreams!
Now am I come upon my long desire!
The days have trampled me like armed men
Thrusting their spears as ever on they go,
And I am weary of all things save the stars,
The wind, shadows and moonrise, and strange dreams.
If you can show me this immortal Fount
Whatso you will is yours.

DALUA

[*Touching him lightly*

You are the king,
And know, now, whence you came, and to what end?

EOCHAIDH

[*Confusedly*

The king? The king? What king?

DALUA

You are the king?

EOCHAIDH

A king of shadows, I! I am no king.

DALUA

And whither now, and whence?

EOCHAIDH

I am not come
From any place I know of, and I go
Where dreams and visions lead me.

[*Suddenly a fountain rises in the mere, the spray rising high in the moonshine*

DALUA

Look, O king!

EOCHAIDH

[*Staring eagerly, with hand above his eyes*

I cannot see what you would have me see.

DALUA

[*Plucking a branch from a mountain-ash, and waving it before the king's face*

Look!

EOCHAIDH

I see a Fountain and within its shadow
A great fish swims, and on the moveless wave
The scarlet berries float: dim mid the depths
The face of One I see, most calm and great,
August, with mournful eyes.

DALUA

Ask what you will.

EOCHAIDH

The word of wisdom, O thou hidden God:
Show me my star of dreams, show me the way!

A VOICE [*Solemnly*

[*Return, O Eochaidh Airemh, wandering king*

EOCHAIDH

That shall not be. No backward way is mine.
If I indeed be king, then kingly I
Shall cleave my way through shadows, as through men.

A VOICE

Return!

EOCHAIDH

Nay, by the Sun and Moon, I swear
I will not turn my feet.

A VOICE

Return! Return!

EOCHAIDH

[*Hesitating, turns to look at* DALUA, *who has swiftly and silently withdrawn into the wood*

[*Silence*

There is no backward way for such as I!
Howbeit—for I am shaken with old dreams,
And as an idle wave tossed to and fro—
I will go hence: I will go back to where
The quiet moonlight spills from the black brow
Of the great hill that towers above the lands
Wherein men hail me king.

[DALUA'S *laughter comes from the wood*

DALUA

Follow, O follow, king of dreams and shadows!

EOCHAIDH

I follow. . . .

[*Exit*

SCENE III.—*The rude interior of the cabin of the huntsman,* MÁNUS. *He is sitting, clad in deerskin, with strapped sandals, before a fire of pine-logs. Long, unkempt, black hair falls about his face. His wife,* MAIVE, *a worn woman with a scared look, stands at the back, plucking feathers from a dead cockerel. At the other side of the hearth,* ETAIN *sits.*

MÁNUS

I've seen that man before who came to-night.

[*He has addressed no one, and no one answers*

I say I have seen that man before.

MAIVE

Hush Mánus

Beware of what you say. How can we tell
Who comes, who goes? And, too, good man, you've had
Three golden pieces.

MÁNUS

Aye, they are put by,
That comforts me: for gold is ever gold.

MAIVE

One was for her who stays with us to-night
And shares our scanty fare.
[*Making a curtsey*
Right welcome, too:
The other was for any who might come,
Asking for bite or sup, for fireside warmth.
The third. . . .

MÁNUS

Yes, woman, yes, I know: for silence. Hush!
[*A moan of wind is heard*
There comes the rain.

ETAIN

[*Rising and going to the left doorway, pulls back the hide. Shuddering, she thrusts it crosswise again, and returns*
It was so beautiful,
So still, with not a breath of wind, and now
The hill-wind moans, the night is filled with tears
Of bitter rain. Good people, have you seen
Such quiet eves fall into stormy nights
Before?

MÁNUS

Who knows the wild way of the wind:
The wild way of the rain? They come, and go:
We stay. We wait. We listen. Not for us
To ask, to wonder.

MAIVE

They're more great than we.
They are so old, the wind and rain, so old,
They know all things, Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes!

ETAIN

Who? . . . Who? . . .

MÁNUS

. . . the woman speaks of Wind and Rain:
Blind Eyes, the dreadful one whom none has seen,
Whose voice we hear: Grey Feathers, his pale love,
Who flies before or follows, grey in rains,
Fierce blue in hail, death-white in whirling snows.

ETAIN

Does any ever come to you by night?
. . . lost woodlander, stray wayfarer from the hills,
Merchant or warrior from the far-off plains?

MÁNUS

None.

MAIVE

We are so far away: so far, I think
Sometimes, we must be close upon the edge
Of the green earth, there where the old tales say
The bramble-bushes and the heather make
A hollow tangle over the abyss.

ETAIN

But sometimes . . . sometimes. . . . Tell me: have you heard,
By dusk or moonset have you never heard
Sweet voices, delicate music? . . . never seen
The passage of the lordly beautiful ones
Men call the Shee?

MÁNUS

[*Rising abruptly*

We do not speak of them.

MAIVE

Hark!

[*A stronger blast strikes the house.* MÁNUS *throws more logs on the fire*

MAIVE

Hark! a second time I've heard a cry!

[*All listen. Suddenly a loud knock is heard.* MAIVE *covers her head, and cowers beside the fire, behind* ETAIN, *who rises.* MÁNUS *seizes a spear, and stands waiting. The heavy knock is repeated*

A VOICE

Open, good folk!

MÁNUS

There is no door to ope:
Thrust back the skins from off the post.

[*The ox-fell is thrust aside, and* EOCHAÏDH *enters. He stops at the threshold, staring at* ETAIN

EOCHAIDH

Good folk,
I give you greeting. [*A pause*
Lady, I bow my knee.

[ETAIN *bows slowly in return.* EOCHAIDH *comes a few steps forward, stops, and looks fixedly at* ETAIN. *He says slowly*——

You have great beauty.

[*A pause*

I have never seen
Beauty so great, so wonderful. In dreams,
In dreams alone such beauty have I seen,
A star above my dusk.

ETAIN

Sir, I pray you
Draw near the fire. This bitter wind and rain
Must sure have chilled you.

[*She points to her vacant three-legged stool. As* EOCHAIDH *slowly passes her,* MÁNUS *slides his hand over his shoulder and back*

MÁNUS

[*With a strange look at* MAIVE

He is not wet. The driving rains have left
No single drop!

MAIVE

[*Piteously*

Good sir! brave lord! good sir!
Have pity on us: sir, have pity!
We are poor, and all alone, and have no wile
To save ourselves from great ones, or from those
Who dwell in secret places on the hills
Or wander where they will in shadow clothed.

MÁNUS

Hush, woman! Name no names: and speak no word
Of them who come unbidden and unknown.
Good, sir, you are most welcome. I am Mánus,
And this poor woman is Maive, my childless wife,
And this is a great lady of the land
Who shelters here to-night. Her name is Etain.

EOCHAIDH

Tell me, good Mánus: who else is here, or whom
You may expect?

MÁNUS

No one, fair lord. The wild
Gray stormy seas are doors that shut the world
From us poor island-folk. . . .

MAIVE

We are alone,
We're all alone, fair sir: there is none here
But whom you see. Gray Feathers and Blind Eyes
Are all we know without.

EOCHAIDH

Who are these others?

MÁNUS

The woman speaks, sir, of the Wind and Rain.
These unknown gods are as all gods that are,
And do not love to have their sacred names
Used lightly: so we speak of him who lifts
A ceaseless wing across all lands and seas,
Moaning or glad, and flieth all unseeing
From darkness into darkness, as Blind Eyes:
And her, his lovely bride, for he is deaf and so
Veers this way and that for ever, seeing not
His love who breaks in tears beneath his wings
Or falls in snows before his frosty breath—
Her we name thus, Grey Feathers.

MAIVE

As for us,
We are poor lonely folk, and mean no wrong.
Sir, sir, if you are of the nameless ones,
The noble nameless ones, do us no ill!

EOCHAIDH

Good folk, I mean no ill. Nor am I made
Of other clay than yours. I am a man.
Let me have shelter here to-night: to-morrow
I will go hence.

MÁNUS

You are most welcome, sir.

EOCHAIDH

And you, fair Etain, is it with your will
That I be sheltered from the wind and rain?

ETAIN

How could I grudge you that ungrudged to me?

[MÁNUS *and* MAIVE *withdraw into the background.. The light wanes, as the logs give less flame.* EOCHAIDH *speaks in a low, strained voice*

Etain, fair beautiful love, at last I know
Why dreams have led me hither. All these years
These eyes like stars have led me: all these years
This love that dwells like moonlight in your face
Has been the wind that moved my idle wave.
Forgive presumptuous words. I mean no ill.
I am a king, and kingly. Ard-Righ, I am,
Ard-Righ of Eiré.

ETAIN

And your name, fair lord?

EOCHAIDH

Eochaidh Airemh.

ETAIN

And I am Etain called,
Daughter of lordly ones, of princely line.
But more I cannot say, for on my mind
A strange forgetful cloud bewilders me,
And I have memory only of those things
Of which I cannot speak, being under bond
To keep the silence of my lordly folk.
How I came here, or to what end, or why
I am left here, I know not.

EOCHAIDH

Truly, I
[*Taking her hand in his*
Now know full well.
Etain, dear love, my dreams
Come true. I have seen this dim pale face in dreams
For days and months and years; till at the last
Too great a spell of beauty held my hours.

My kingdom was no more to me than sand,
Or a green palace built of August leaves
Already yellowing, waiting for the wind
To scatter them to north and south and east.
I have forgotten all that men hold dear,
And given my kinghood to the wheeling crows,
The trampling desert hinds, the snarling fox.
I have no thought, no dream, no hope, but this—

[*Kissing her upon the brow*

To call you love, to take you hence, my Queen—
Queen of my Heart, my Queen, my Dream, my Queen!

ETAIN

[*Looking into his face, with thrown-back head*

I too, I too, am lifted with the breath
Of a tumultous wind. My lord and king,
I too am lit with fire, which fills my heart,
And lifts it like a flame to burn with thine,
To pass and be at one and flame in thine,
My, lord, my king! My lord, my lord, my king!

EOCHAIDH

The years, the bitter years of all the world
Are now no more. We have gained that which stands
Above the trampling feet of hurrying years.

[*A brief burst of mocking laughter is heard*

EOCHAIDH

[*Turning angrily, and looking into the shadowy background where are*

MÁNUS *and* MAIVE

Who laughed? What means that laughter?

MÁNUS

[*Sullenly*

No one laughed.

EOCHAIDH

Who laughed? Who laughed?

MAIVE

Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes.

ETAIN

[*Wearily*

None laughed. It was the hooting of an owl.
Dear lord, sit here. I am weary.

[MÁNUS *and* MAIVE *withdraw, and lie down.* EOCHAIDH *and* ETAIN *sit before the smouldering fire. The room darkens. Suddenly* EOCHAIDH *leans forward, and whispers*

EOCHAIDH

Etain!
Etain, dear love!

ETAIN

[*Not looking at him, and slowly swaying as she sings*

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers
And their breath is wind
That blows over grass
Filled with dewy clover.

Their limbs are more white
Than shafts of moonshine:
They are more fleet
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad
And are terrible:
When their lances shake
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are
How beautiful
The lordly ones
In the hollow hills.

[*Darkness, save for the red flame in the heart of the fire.*

END OF ACT I

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE I.—*A year later. In the hall of the Royal Dûn at Tara. The walls covered with skins, stag's heads and boar's heads, weapons: at intervals great torches. At lower end, a company of warriors, for the most part in bratta of red and green, or red and green and blue, like tartan but in long, broad lines or curves, and not in squares, deerskin gaiters and sandals. Also harpers and others, and white-clad druids and bards. On a dais sits* EOCHAIDH *the High King. Beside him sits* ETAIN, *his queen. Behind her is a group of white-robed girls.*

HARPERS (*strike a loud clanging music from their harps*).

CHORUS OF BARDS

Glory of years, O king, glory of years!
Hail, Eochaidh the High King of Eiré, hail!
Etain the Beautiful, hail!

OTHER BARDS, HARPERS, AND MINSTRELS

Hail!

DRUIDS

Hail!

WARRIORS

Hail!

EOCHAIDH

Drink from the great shells and horns! . . .
for I am glad
That on this night which rounds my year of joy,
In amity and all glad fellowship
We feast together.

[*Turning to* ETAIN

Etain, speak, my Queen.

ETAIN

[*Rising*

Warriors and druids, bards, harpers, friends
Of high and low degree, I who am queen
Do also thank you. But I am weary now,
And weary too with strange perplexing dreams
Thrice dreamed: and so I bid you all farewell.

[*Bows low. Turning to the king adds*

To you, dear love, my lord and king, I too
Will bid farewell to-night.

EOCHAIDH

[*Lovingly*

Say not farewell:
Say not farewell, dear love, for we shall meet
When the last starry dews are gathered up
And loud in the green woods the throstles call.

ETAIN

Dear, I am tired. . . . Farewell!

EOCHAIDH

No, no, my fawn—
My fawn of love: this night, this night I pray
Leave me not here alone: for under all
This outer tide of joy I am sore wrought
By dreams and premonitions. For three nights
I have heard sudden laughters in the dark,
Where nothing was; and in the first false dawn
Have seen phantasmal shapes, and on the grass
A host of shadows marching, bent one way
As when green leagues of reed become one reed
Blown slantwise by the wind.

ETAIN

I, too, have heard
Strange delicate music, subtle murmurings,
A little lovely noise of myriad leaves,
As though the greenness on the wind o' the south
Came traveling to bare woods on one still night:

[*A pause*

I, too, have heard sweet laughter at the dawn,
Amid the twilight fern: but when I leaned
To see the unknown friends, no more than this
I saw—grey delicate shadows on the grass,
Grey shadows on the fern, the flowers, the leaves,
Swift flitting, like foam-shadows o'er a wave,
Before the grey wave of the coming day.

[*A pause: then suddenly*

But I am weary. Eochaidh, love and king,
Sweet sleep and sweeter dreams!

[ETAIN *leans and kisses the king. He stoops, and takes her right hand, and lifts it to his lips. Warriors raise their swords and spears, as* ETAIN *leaves, followed by her women.*

WARRIORS AND OTHERS

The Queen! The Queen!

HARPERS (*strike a loud clanging music from their harps*).

CHORUS OF BARDS

Glory of years, O king, glory of years!
Hail, Eochaidh Ard-Righ of Eiré, hail! hail!
Etain the Beautiful, hail!

OTHER BARDS, HARPERS, AND MINSTRELS

Hail!

DRUIDS

Hail!

WARRIORS

Hail!

EOCHAIDH

[*Raising a white hazel-wand, till absolute silence falls*

Now go in peace. To one and all, good-night.

[*The warriors, bards, minstrels troop out, leaving only the harpers and a few druids, who do not follow, but stand uncertain as a stranger passes through their midst and confronts the king. He is young,*

princely, fair to see; clad all in green, with a gold belt, a gold torque round his neck, gold armlets on his bare arms, and two gold torques round his bare ankles. On his long curling dark hair, falling over his shoulder, is a small green cap from which trails a peacock-feather. To his left side is slung a small clarsach, or harp.

MIDIR

Hail, Eochaidh, King of Eiré.

EOCHAIDH

[*Standing motionless and looking fixedly at the stranger*

Hail, fair sir!

MIDIR

[*With light grace*

Sorrow upon me that I am so late
For this great feasting; but I come from far,
And winds and rains delayed me. Yet full glad
I am to stand before the king to-night
And claim a boon!

EOCHAIDH

No stranger claims in vain
Here in my Dûn, a boon if that boon be
Such I may grant without a loss of fame,
Honour, or common weal. But first, fair sir,
I ask the name and rank of him who craves,
To all unknown?

MIDIR

I am a king's first son:
My kingdom lies beyond your lordly realms,
O king, and yet upon our mist-white shores
The Three Great Waves of Eiré rise in foam.
But I am under *geasa*, sacred bonds,
To tell to no one, even to the king,
My name and lineage. King, I wish you well:
Lordship and peace and all your heart's desire.

EOCHAIDH

Fair lord, my thanks I give. Lordship I have,
And peace a little while, though one brief year
Has seen its birth and life: my heart's desire—
Ah, unknown lord, give me my heart's desire—
And I will give you lordship of these lands,
Kingship of Eiré, riches, greatness, power,
All, all, for but the little infinite thing
That is my heart's desire!

MIDIR

And that, O king?

EOCHAIDH

It is to know there is no twilight hour
Upon my day of joy: no starless night
Wherein my swimming love may reach in vain
For any shore, wherein great love shall drown
And be a lifeless weed, which the pale shapes
Of ghastly things shall look at and pass by
With idle fin.

MIDIR

Have not the poets sung
Great love survives the night, and climbs the stars,
And lives th' immortal hour along the brows
Of that infinitude called Youth, whom men
Name Oengus, Sunrise?

EOCHAIDH

Sir, I too have been
A poet.

MIDIR

Within the Country of the Young,
Whence I have come, our life is full of joy,
For there the poet's dreams alone are true.

EOCHAIDH

Dreams . . . dreams. . . .

[*A pause: then abruptly*

But tell me now, fair lord, the boon
You crave.

MIDIR

I have heard rumour say that there is none
Can win the crown at chess from this crowned king
Called Eochaidh.

EOCHAIDH

Well?

MIDIR

And I would win that crown:
For none in all the lands that I have been
Has led me to the maze wherein the pawns
Are lost or go awry.

EOCHAIDH

Sir, it is late,
But if I play with you, and I should win,
What is the guerdon?

MIDIR

That—your heart's desire.

[*A pause*

MIDIR

'And what, O king, my guerdon if I win?

EOCHAIDH

What you shall ask.

MIDIR

Then be it so, O, king.

EOCHAIDH

Yet why not on the morrow, my fair lord?
To-night the hour is late; the queen is gone:
The chessboard lies upon a fawnskin couch
Beside the queen. She is weary, asleep.
To-morrow then . . .

MIDIR

[*Drawing from his green vest a small chess-board of ivory, and then a handful of gold pawns*

Not so, Ard-Righ, for see
I have a chess-board here, fit for a king—
For it is made of yellow ivory
That in dim days of old was white as cream

When Dana, mother of the ancient gods,
Withdrew it from her thigh, with golden shapes
Of unborn gods and kings to be her pawns.

EOCHAIDH

[*Leaning forward curiously*

Lay it upon the dais. In all my years
I have seen none so fair, so wonderful.

[*Both lie upon the dais, and move the pawns upon the ivory board*

HARPERS (*play a delicate music*).

A YOUNG MINSTREL

[*Sings slowly*

I have seen all things pass and all men go
Under the shadow of the drifting leaf:
Green leaf, red leaf, brown leaf,
Grey leaf blown to and fro:
Blown to and fro.

I have seen happy dreams rise up and pass
Silent and swift as shadows on the grass:
Grey shadows of old dreams,
Grey beauty of old dreams,
Grey shadows in the grass.

SCENE II.—*The same.*

EOCHAIDH

[*Rising abruptly, followed by* MIDIR *more slowly*

So, you have won! For the first time the king
Has known one subtler than himself. Fair sir,
Your boon?

MIDIR

O king, it is a little thing.
All that I ask is this, that I may touch
With my own lips the white hand of the queen:
And that sweet Etain whom you love so well
Should listen to the distant shell-sweet song,
A little echoing song that I have made
Down by the foam on sea-drown'd shores to please
Her lovelier beauty.

EOCHAIDH

Sir, I would that boon
Were other than it is: for the queen sleeps
Grown sad with weariness and many dreams:
But as you have my kingly word, so be it.

[*Calls to the young minstrel*

Go boy, to where the women sleep, and call
Etain, the Queen.

[*The minstrel goes, to left*

HARPERS (*play a low delicate music*).

[*Enter* ETAIN, *in a robe of pale green, with mistletoe intertwined in her long loose hair*

EOCHAIDH

Welcome, fair lovely queen.
But, Etain, whom I love as the dark wave
Loves the white star within its travelling breast,
Why do you come thus clad in green, with hair
Entangled with the mystic mistletoe, as when
I saw you first, in that dim, lonely wood
Down by forgotten shores, where the last clouds
Slip through grey branches into the grey wave?

ETAIN

I could not sleep. My dreams came close to me
And whispered in my ears. And someone played
A vague perplexing air without my room.
I was as dim and silent as the grass,
Till a faint wind moved over me, and dews
Gathered, and in the myriad little bells
I saw a myriad stars.

EOCHAIDH

This nameless lord
Has won a boon from me. It is to touch
The whiteness of this hand with his hot lips,
For he is fevered with a secret trouble,
From rumour of that beauty which too well
I know a burning flame. And he would sing
A song of echoes caught from out the foam
Of sea-drown'd shores, a song that he has made,
Dreaming a foolish idle dream, an idle dream.

ETAIN

[*Looking long and lingeringly at* MIDIR, *slowly gives him her hand. When he has raised it to his lips, bowing, and let it go, she starts, puts it to her brow bewilderingly, and again looks fixedly at* MIDIR

Fair nameless lord, I pray you sing that song.

MIDIR

[*Slowly chanting and looking steadfastly at* ETAIN

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers,
And their breath is wind
That stirs amid grasses
Filled with white clover.

Their limbs are more white
Than shafts of moonshine:
They are more fleet
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad
And are terrible;
When their lances shake
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are,
How beautiful,
The lordly ones
In the hollow hills.

[*Silence.* ETAIN *again puts her hand to her brow bewilderedly*

ETAIN

[*Dreamily*

I have heard. . . . I have dreamed. . . . I, too, have heard,
Have sung . . . that song: O lordly ones that dwell

In secret places in the hollow hills,
Who have put moonlit dreams into my mind
And filled my noons with visions, from afar
I hear sweet dewfall voices, and the clink,
The delicate silvery spring and clink
Of faery lances underneath the moon.

MIDIR

I am a song
In the Land of the Young,
A sweet song:
I am Love.

I am a bird
With white wings
And a breast of flame,
Singing, singing.

The wind sways me
On the quicken-bough:
Hark! Hark!
I hear laughter.

Among the nuts
On the hazel-tree
I sing to the Salmon
In the faery pool.

What is the dream
The Salmon dreams,
In the Pool of Connla
Under the hazels?

It is: There is no death
Midir, with thee,
In the honeysweet land
Of Heart's Desire.

It is a name wonderful,
Midir, Love:
It was born on the lips
Of Oengus Og.

Go, look for it:
Lost name, beautiful:
Strayed from the honeysweet
Land of Youth.

I am Midir, Love:
But where is my secret
Name in the land of
Heart's desire?

I am a bird
With white wings
And a breast of flame
Singing, singing:

The Salmon of knowledge
Hears, whispers:
Look for it, Midir,
In the heart of Etain:

Etain, Etain,
My Heart's Desire:
Love, love, love,
Sorrow, Sorrow!

[ETAIN *moves a little nearer, then stops. She puts both hands before her eyes, then withdraws them*

ETAIN

I am a small green leaf in a great wood
And you, the wind o' the South!

[*Silence.* EOCHAIDH, *as though spell-bound, cannot advance, but stretches his arms towards* ETAIN

EOCHAIDH

Etain, speak!
What is this song the harper sings, what tongue
It this he speaks? for in no Gaelic lands
Is speech like this upon the lips of men.
No word of all these honey-dripping words
Is known to me. Beware, beware the words

Brewed in the moonshine under ancient oaks
White with pale banners of the mistletoe
Twined round them in their slow and stately death.
It is the Feast of Sáveen.[1]

ETAIN

All is dark
That has been light.

EOCHAIDH

Come back, come back, O love that slips away!

ETAIN

I cannot hear your voice so far away:
So far away in that dim lonely dark
Whence I have come. The light is gone.
Farewell!

EOCHAIDH

Come back, come back! It is a dream that calls,
A wild and empty dream! There is no light
Within that black and terrible abyss
Whereon you stand. Etain, come back, come back,
I give you life and love.

[1] Samhain. The Celtic Festival of Summerend Hallowe'en.

ETAIN

I cannot hear
Your strange forgotten words, already dumb
And empty sounds of dim defeated shows.
I go from dark to light.

MIDIR

[*Slowly whispering*
From dark to light.

EOCHAIDH

O, do not leave me, Star of my Desire!
My love, my hope, my dream: for now I know
That you are part of me, and I the clay,
The idle mortal clay that longed to gain,
To keep, to hold, the starry Danann fire,
The little spark that lives and does not die.

ETAIN

Old, dim, wind-wandered lichens on a stone
Grown grey with ancient age: as these thy words,
Forgotten symbols. So, Farewell: farewell!

MIDIR

Hasten, lost love, found love! Come, Etain, come!

ETAIN

What are those sounds I hear? The wild deer call
From the hill-hollows: and in the hollows sing,
Mid waving birchen boughs, brown wandering streams:
And through the rainbow'd spray flit azure birds
Whose song is faint, is faint and far with love:
O, home-sweet, hearth-sweet, cradle-sweet it is,
The song I hear!

MIDIR

[*Slowly moving backward*

Come, Etain, come! Afar
The hillside maids are milking the wild deer;
The elf-horns blow: green harpers on the shores
Play a wild music out across the foam:
Rose-flusht on one long wave's pale golden front,
The moon of faery hangs, low on that wave.
Come! When the vast full yellow flower is swung
High o'er the ancient woods wherein old gods,
Ancient as they, dream their eternal dreams
That in the faery dawns as shadows rise
And float into the lives and minds of men

And are the tragic pulses of the world,
Then shall we two stoop by the Secret Pool
And drink, and salve our sudden eyes with dew
Gathered from foxglove and the moonlit fern,
And see. . . .

[*Slowly chanting and looking steadfastly at* ETAIN

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers,
And their breath is wind
That stirs amid grasses
Filled with white clover.

Their limbs are more white
Than shafts of moonshine:
They are more fleet
Than the March wind.

They laugh and are glad
And are terrible:
When their lances shake
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are,
How beautiful,
The lordly ones
In the hollow hills.

ETAIN

Hush! Hush!
Who laughed?

MIDIR

None laughed. All here are in a spell
Of frozen silence.

ETAIN

Sure, sure, one laughed.
Tell me, sweet Voice, which one among the Shee
Is he who plays with shadows, and whose laugh
Moves like a bat through silent haunted woods?

MIDIR

He is not here: so fear him not: Dalua.
It is the mortal name of him whose age
Was idle laughing youth when Time was born.
He is not here: but come with me, and where
The falling stars spray down the dark Abyss,
There, on a quicken, growing from mid-earth

And hanging like a spar across the depths,
Dalua sits: and sometimes through the dusk
Of immemorial congregated time,
His laughter rings: and then he listens long,
And when the echo swims up from the deeps
He springs from crag to crag, for he is mad,
And like a lost lamb crieth to his ewe,
That ancient dreadful Mother of the Gods
Whom men call Fear.

When he has wandered thence
Whether among the troubled lives of men or mid
The sacred Danann ways, dim wolflike shapes
Of furtive shadow follow him and leap
The windway of his thought: or sometimes dwarfed, more dread,
The stealthy moonwhite weasels of life and death
Glide hither and thither. Even the high gods
Who laugh and mock the lonely Fairy Fool
When in his mortal guise he haunts the earth,
Shrink from the Amadan Dhu when in their ways
He moves, silent, unsmiling, wearing a dark star
Above his foamwhite brows and midnight eyes.

Come, Etain, come: and have no fear, wild
fawn,
For I am Midir, Love, who loved you well
Before this mortal veil withheld you here.
Come!

In the Land of Youth
There are pleasant places:
Green meadows, woods,
Swift grey-blue waters.

There is no age there,
Nor any sorrow:
As the stars in heaven
Are the cattle in the valleys.

Great rivers wander
Through flowery plains,
Streams of milk, of mead,
Streams of strong ale.

There is no hunger
And no thirst
In the Hollow Land,
In the Land of Youth.

How beautiful they are,
The lordly ones
Who dwell in the hills,
In the hollow hills.

They play with lances
And are proud and terrible,
Marching in the moonlight
With fierce blue eyes.

They love and are loved:
There is no sin there:
But slaying without death,
And loving without shame.

Every day a bird sings:
It is the Desire of the Heart.
What the bird sings,
That is it that one has.

Come, longing heart,
Come, Etain, come!
Wild Fawn, I am calling
Across the fern!

[*Slowly* ETAIN, *clasping his hand, moves away with* MIDIR. *They pass the spell-bound guards, and disappear. A sudden darkness falls. Out of the shadow* DALUA *moves rapidly to the side of* EOCHAIDH, *who starts, and peers into the face of the stranger*

EOCHAIDH

It is the same Dalua whom I met
Long since, in that grey shadowy wood
About the verge of the old broken earth
Where, at the last, moss-clad it hangs in cloud.

DALUA

I am come.

EOCHAIDH

My dreams! my dreams! Give me my dream!

DALUA

There is none left but this—

[*Touches the king, who stands stiff and erect, sways, and falls to the ground*

DALUA

. . . . . the dream of Death.

THE END

THE HOUSE OF USNA

A DRAMA

NOTE

Concobar MacNessa was King of Ulster and Ard-Righ or High-King of Ireland at the beginning of the Christian era. By some chroniclers his reign is said to be synchronous with the mortal years of Christ.

Concobar had founded the knightly order of "The Red Branch"—the forerunner, though on a more epical scale, of the Round Table of the Arthurian Chivalry—and by his force of will and the power of his nation (the Ultonians, the people of Uladh, or Ulster) had become not only High-King of Ireland, but dreamed to make of its nations one nation, and that he and his sons and his son's sons should be its kings. In this he disregarded both the prophecies of the seers and the will of the gods; for he had long schemed, and at last accomplished, a deed of evil and treachery upon three of the champions of the Alban or Scottish Gael, Naysha (Naois) and his two brothers, the sons of Usna, though the hero Usna had been allied to him and was bond-brother in war and courtesy.

Note

The period of this drama is about four years after the elopement of Deirdrê, as told in the old tale of Deirdrê and the Sons of Usna: a retold version of which, from Gaelic and other sources, has already appeared in the Old World Series of reprints. More explicitly, the actual period is the year following the triumph of Concobar's inveterate hate in his treacherous murder of Naysha (Naois) and his brothers Ailne (Ainnle) and Ardan, because of Naysha's love of Deirdrê (the High King's ward and most beautiful woman of her time, and by Concobar destined to be his queen, despite the prophecies at her birth) and of Deirdrê's for Naysha. Because of broken kingly honour, and the slaying of the sons of Usna and the death of Deirdrê, Cormac Conlingas, Concobar's son and heir, with other champions, seceded and joined the dread enemy Queen Meave, then advancing against the Ultonian Kingdom from the middle provinces and the west.[1] Conaill Carna and the youthful Setanta (already famous as the Hound (Cù), or Cuchulain, the Hound of

[1] As the names have everywhere been anglicised. . . . e.g. Medb or Medbh into Meave, pronounced Mave; and Naois into Naysha . . . I need add only that Cuchulain is pronounced Coohoolin, and Eilidh Eily.

Chulain) were among those who in their loyalty remained with Concobar to fight with vain magnificent heroism against the will of the gods.

It is at this juncture that Cormac Conlingas, suddenly deciding to return to Uladh to rejoin Concobar and the Red Branch, is seduced by his great love for the wife of Cravetheen the Harper, and, while with her, is burned to death by Cravetheen.

When the drama opens, Concobar (already, as was presaged, brought to the verge of madness by his thwarted and inconsolable passion for Deirdrê, and by his unkingly and treacherous revenge and its outcome) does not know that this new evil is come upon him and his house and nation, though in truth the end is at hand when the star of Ireland shall set in blood from the north to the south and from the east to the west.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CONCOBAR MACNESSA. *King of Ulster and High-King of Ireland.*

DUACH. *A Druid.*

COEL. *An Old Blind Harper.*

CRAVETHEEN. *A Harper of the Kingship of Còmairey Mòr.*

MAINÉ. *A Boy.*

and

ULTONIAN WARRIORS.

UNSEEN: *Mourners passing through the forest with the charred bodies of Cormac Conlingas and Eilidh the Fair.*

Chorus of Harpers.

SCENE I

Open glade in a forest of pines and oaks, with the silent fires of sunset on the boles. Confused cries are heard, but as though a long way off. A dishevelled savage figure, clad in deerskin and hide-bound leggings, slips forward furtively from tree to tree. His long dark locks fall about his misshapen shoulders: his left arm is in a sling: in his right hand he carries a spear. He stands at last listening intently.

Starting abruptly he lifts his spear, but slowly lowers it as an old man, blind, clad in a white robe, with flat gold cirque about his waist and an oak-fillet round his head, comes forward leaning on a staff.

COEL

Who is it who is near me? I hear the quick breath of one who . . . of one who hunts . . . or is hunted.

CRAVETHEEN

Druid, I am a stranger. Where am I? Tell me your name?

COEL

I am Coel the Druid. . . . Coel the old blind harper.

CRAVETHEEN

I, too, am a harper, though I am no druid. I am Cravetheen the Harper. I am warrior and chief harper to the great king Cònairey Mòr. I crave sanctuary, Coel the Harper! I crave sanctuary . . . quick! quick!

COEL

From whom?

[*The confused cries are louder and grow louder, then cease.*

CRAVETHEEN

[*Shaking his spear*

From *them.*

COEL

You are safe here. Tell me this, you who are called Cravetheen: where is Cormac Conlingas, the son of the High-King Concobar? Does he hasten north to the side of his father whom he deserted, because Concobar the king slew the sons of Usna, and because Deirdrê died of that great sorrow, Deirdrê, the wife of Naysha, the pride of the house of Usna?

CRAVETHEEN

[*With savage mocking*

Ay, a great king truly, Concobar, the son of Nessa! From childhood he kept the beautiful Deirdrê to be his queen, but Naysha swooped like a hawk and carried her to the north, because each loved each and laughed at the king. And then did the great Concobar track him through Eiré to Alba? No! Did he force the sword upon him, Deirdrê's beloved? No! For three years he lay like a wolf on a hillside staring at a far-off fold. . . . and then with smooth words he won Naysha and his two hero-brothers, and the beautiful Deirdrê, and gave kingly warrant to them. . . . and then, ha! then was the noise of swords, then were red streams of blood, where the House of Usna fought the fight of three heroes against a multitude . . . and their shameful, glorious death . . . and then Deirdrê, wonder of the world, did Concobar win her at the last? No! No! She fell dead by the side of him whom she loved, by the body of Naysha, the son of Usna! A true queen, Deirdrê the Beautiful!

COEL [*Raising his staff*

Who are *you*? Who are *you*? No sanctuary here for the foe of Concobar the king!

CRAVETHEEN

[*With a loud, wailing, chanting voice*

I am the voice of the House of Usna. I am the voice in the wind crying for ever and ever "Kings shall lie in the dust: great princes shall be brought to shame: the champions of the mighty shall be as swordsmen waving reeds, as spearmen spearing the grass, as men pursuing and wooing shadows!" (*A moment's pause.*) Ay, by the sun and wind, Coel the Blind, I am the broken spear to slay them that foully slew the sons of Usna . . . the spear to goad to madness Concobar the king!

COEL

[*Angrily*

Tell me, mad fool, do you fly from the wrath of Cormac Conlingas, the son of Concobar?

CRAVETHEEN

[*Laughing mockingly*

Cormac, the son of Concobar! Cormac Conlingas, Cormac of the Yellow Locks! No, no, old man, I do not fly before the wrath of Cormac the Beautiful! Nor shall any man again fly before him, before Cormac the Beautiful, Cormac the Prince, Cormac the son of Concobar!

COEL [*Angrily*

What! is the king's son dead . . . is he slain?

CRAVETHEEN

[*Coming close, and speaking low, in a changed voice*

Old man, there was a woman of my people as beautiful as Deirdrê. She loved an Ultonian, that had for name Cormac. . . . Cormac Conlingas. Cònairey Mòr was fierce with anger at that, and sent him away, but against her will, and gave her to *me*, who loved her, though she hated me. So I took her to my Dûn. But this Cormac came there and found her . . . and I . . . oh, I, too, came back suddenly, and learned that he was there!

[*A long wailing chant is heard*

COEL

Hush! What is that?

CRAVETHEEN

[*Still leaning close, and speaking low*

That? . . . That is the wailing of those who carry hither to Concobar the dead bodies of Cormac his son and Eilidh the Fair. [*Suddenly springing back, and crying loudly.*] For I set fire to the great Dûn, O, Coel the Blind, and I laughed when the red flames

swept up to where the sleepers lay—and they died, Cormac and Eilidh, to the glad death-song of me, Cravetheen the Harper! Two charred logs these mourners carry now—Ah-h-h!

[*As he cries a spear whirls across the stage from left to right, then another, then a third, which strikes the ground at Cravetheen's feet. Wild cries are heard—a rush—and six or eight Ultonian warriors leap forward, crying as they seize him*

WARRIORS

Death to the Harper!—death to Cravetheen the Harper, who has slain the king's son!

SCENE II

In the background, vague in the moonlight, the walls of a great Dûn or ancient fortress, half obscured by trees. To the right, in deep shadow, an oak. Concobar, wrapt in a white robe, with a fillet of gold round his head, leans in silence against the oak. In front, in the moonlight, the boy Maiṇé, clad in a deerskin, lies on the ground looking towards the king, and playing softly upon a reed with seven holes in it.

CONCOBAR

Hush.

[*Mainé ceases playing*

CONCOBAR

[*Coming slowly forward*

Where is Deirdrê?

MAINÉ

[*Unstirring, plays softly*

CONCOBAR

[*Slowly advancing, till he stands above Mainé, and looks down at him, in silence*

Where is Deirdrê?

MAINÉ

[*Taking the reed from his mouth, in a low, prolonged, chanting voice*

Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

CONCOBAR

It is the voice of my dreams.

MAINÉ

Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

CONCOBAR [*Muttering*

Duach the Wise. . . . Where is Duach the Wise? These were his words: "In the whisper of the leaf by night, in the first moaning air of the new wind, in the voice of the wave, that which has been is told, that which is to be is known." O, heart of my heart. . . . Deirdrê, my love, my desire!

MAINÉ

[Rises and goes silently over to the oak, and leans against it, lost in shadow

CONCOBAR

Heart of my heart, Deirdrê! Love of my love, desire of all desire—can no voice rise to those red lips, red as rowans, in that silent place? There is no sadness like unto the sadness of the king. Dream of dreams, I trampled all dreams till the hour of my desire, and in that hour you were stolen from me: and in his heart the king was as a swineherd herding swine, a helot, a slave. Was it I who put death upon Naysha the Fair? Was it I who put death upon the sons of Usna? It was not I, by the Sun and the Moon! It was the beauty of Deirdrê. O, beauty too great and sore! Deirdrê, love of my love, sorrow of my sorrow, grief of my grief! I am old, because of my sorrow. There is no king so great that he may not perish because of a woman's love. She sleeps: she sleeps: she is not dead! I will go to the grianân, and will cry *Heart o' Beauty, awake! It is I, Concobar the King!* She will hear, and she will put white hands through her hair, like white doves going into the shadow of a wood: and I

will see her eyes like stars, and her face pale and wonderful as dawn, and her lips like twilight water, and she will sigh, and my heart will be as wind fainting in hot grass, and I will laugh because that I am made king of the world and as the old gods, but greater than they, greater than they, greater than they!

MAINÉ

[*Chanting slowly from the shadow*
Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

CONCOBAR

[*Slowly turning, and looking towards the shadow whence the sound came*
Who spoke?

[*Silence*

CONCOBAR

Who spoke? (*Turning again.*) It was the pulse of my heart. They lie who say that Deirdrê is dead. The sons of Usna are dead. May the dust of Naysha rot among the worms of the earth. It was he who was king, not I! It was he whom Deirdrê loved. . . . Deirdrê, who was so fair, the most beautiful of women; my dream, my love!

[*A long wailing cry is heard. Concobar lifts his head, and listens.*

CONCOBAR

It is Duach. The Druid has deep wisdom. I will ask him to tell me where Deirdrê is. There is no woman in the world for me but the daughter of Felim. Her beauty is more terrible than day to the creatures of the night; more mysterious than night to the winged children of the noon.

[*The boughs dispart, and a tall, white-haired man, clad in white, with a gold belt, and with a wreath of oak leaves, enters from the left*

DUACH

Hail, O king!

CONCOBAR

I heard the howl of the grey wolf, but now you come alone. Where is the wolf?

DUACH

There was no wolf. It was an image only of your own mind. It was but your own sorrow, O king.

CONCOBAR

Tell me, Duach, who lives in yonder great Dûn?

DUACH

[*Looking at the king curiously, then slowly*

Concobar the king; with the comrades of the king, and his guards; his harpers and poets; the women of the household.

CONCOBAR

Can you see the grianân, Duach?

DUACH

I see the grianân, Concobar mac Nessa.

CONCOBAR

Nessa . . . yes, I am the son of Nessa. . . . Nessa, who was so fair. Tell me, Duach; in her youth was she so beautiful as the harpers and poets say?

DUACH

She was so beautiful that few looked at her untroubled. In her eyes youths dreamed; old men looked back. To all men Nessa was a light and a flame.

CONCOBAR

Was she fair, as Deirdrê is fair? Was she beautiful, as Deirdrê is beautiful?

DUACH

Deirdrê, whom you have slain, is dead.

CONCOBAR

[*Calling*

Deirdrê, dear love, come! I am here! I wait!

DUACH

From that silence where both are, their names only may come back like falling dew.

CONCOBAR

There is none so beautiful as Deirdrê.

DUACH

She sleeps by Naysha, son of Usna.

CONCOBAR

[*Furiously*

You lie, old man. Naysha is dead.

DUACH

She sleeps by Naysha, son of Usna.

CONCOBAR

[*Troubled*

Tell me! When shall she wake?

DUACH

She shall wake no more.

CONCOBAR

Speak no lies, Druid. I heard her laugh a brief while ago. She came out into the woods at the rising of the moon.

DUACH

She will wake no more.

[*Silence*

DUACH

Hearken, Concobar mac Nessa! That was an evil deed, the slaying of the sons of Usna. They were the noblest of all the Gaels of Eiré and Alba.

CONCOBAR

[*Sullenly*

They are dead.

DUACH

They are more to be feared dead than when their young, sweet, terrible life was upon them. Their voices cry for vengeance, and all men hear. Women whisper.

CONCOBAR

What do they whisper?

DUACH

"Most fair and beautiful were the sons of Usna, slain treacherously by Concobar the High-King."

CONCOBAR

What vengeance is called for by those who cry for an eric?

DUACH

It is no eric they cry, but the broken honour of the king.

CONCOBAR

And what do the young men say?

DUACH

They say: *" He has slain the image of our desire."*

CONCOBAR

And what is the burthen of the sing the singers sing?

DUACH

" The beauty of the world is now as an old song that is sung."

[*Silence*

MAINÉ

[*From the shadow of the oak, strikes a note, and, in a low voice, chants slowly*

Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

CONCOBAR

Can dreams have a voice?

DUACH

They alone speak. It is our spoken words that are the idle dreams.

CONCOBAR

Dreams—dreams. I am sick of dreams! It is love I long for—my lost love! my lost love!

DUACH

It is a madness, that love.

CONCOBAR

Better that madness than all wisdom.

[*Silence*

MAINÉ

[*Playing a note or two, slowly, chants, from the shadow of the oak*

Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

CONCOBAR

Duach, can dreams speak?

DUACH

The dead, old wisdom, the wind, dreams—these speak. All else are troubled murmurs, confused cries, echoes of echoes.

CONCOBAR

[*Stands with outstretched arms, staring towards the Dûn*

DUACH

Death and beauty are in his eyes.

CONCOBAR

[*With a sudden, passionate gesture, flinging up his arms supplicatingly*

Deirdrê, my queen, my dream, my desire! Death and beauty were in your eyes as a little child, oh, fawn of women, when I lit my dreams at your face before the House of Usna did me that bitter, bitter wrong! . . . that bitter, bitter wrong! O, Naysha, more terrible your quiet smile in death than all the armies of Meave! Deirdrê, Deirdrê, death

and beauty are in your eyes, my queen, my dream, my desire!

[*With a sobbing cry he sinks to his knees, bows his head, and pulls his robe about him*

MAINÉ

[*Slowly advances from the shadow, softly playing on his reed-flute*

DUACH

Sing!

MAINÉ

[*Sings*

Dim face of Beauty haunting all the world,
Fair face of Beauty all too fair to see,
Where the lost stars adown the heavens are hurled,
There, there alone for thee
May white peace be.

For here, where all the dreams of men are whirled
Like sere, torn leaves of autumn to and fro,
There is no place for thee in all the world,
Who drifted as a star,
Beyond, afar.

Beauty, and face of Beauty, Mystery, Wonder,
What are these dreams to foolish babbling men—
Who cry with little noises 'neath the thunder
Of ages ground to sand,
To a little sand?

[*Concobar slowly rises. He turns and looks at Mainé*

CONCOBAR

Who made that song?

MAINÉ

Cormac the Red, the father of my father, and son of Felim the Harper.

CONCOBAR

Felim! . . . Felim the Harper—it was he who was the father of Deirdrê. He harps no more. [*Turning to Dúach.*] Do you remember when we went to the house of Felim the Harper in the days of my youth? Do you remember the birthnight of Deirdrê?

DUACH

Ay.

CONCOBAR

And the prophecy of Cathba the Arch-Druid?

DUACH

Ay: that before his eyes he saw a sea of blood, and saw it rise and rise and rise till it overflowed great straths, and laved the flanks of high hills, and from the summits of the mountains poured down upon the lands of the Gael in a thundering flood, blood-red, to the blood-red sea.

CONCOBAR

[*Troubled, and moving slowly to and fro*

Did Cathba see the end?

DUACH

He saw the end.

CONCOBAR

It was but the idle wisdom of a dreamer.

DUACH

That idle wisdom is the utterance of the gods. The dreamers and poets and seers are their voices.

CONCOBAR

What were the last words of Cathba the Wise?

DUACH

That Eiré, the most beautiful of all lands under the sun, should be the saddest of all lands under the sun. Blood shall run in that land till Famine shall make her home there, he said: and tears shall be shed for it in every age: and all wisdom and beauty and hope shall grow there: and she shall be a lamp, and then know the darkness of darkness. But before the end she shall be a queenly land again, and the nations shall bow before her as the soul of peoples born anew. For into all the nations of the world, he said, Eiré shall die, but shall live again. She shall be the soul of the nations.

CONCOBAR

Too many dreams . . . too many dreams!

DUACH

Cathba saw all that is to be.

CONCOBAR

If Felim the Harper were to come again. . . .

DUACH

He would ask: Where is Emain Macha, the royal city, the beautiful city? Where are the sons of Usna? Where is Deirdrê, the most beautiful of women? Where is the glory of the Red Branch?

CONCOBAR

[*Confusedly*

The Red Branch! . . . The Red Branch! At least, at least, the Red Branch stands!

DUACH

What of Fergus? . . . what of Cormac Conlingas? They and a third of the Red Branch are gone from you: Fergus, the first champion of Ulla; Cormac Conlingas, the greatest of your sons, the king that is to be!

CONCOBAR

Conaill Carna is with me . . . and Setanta the wonderful youth, that is called Cuchulain.

DUACH

Yet neither they nor the gods themselves shall in the end prevail.

CONCOBAR

[*With sudden passion*

Duach, win back to me my son Cormac, and I will give you whatsoever you will—yea, my kingship. Him only do I love of all men, him only, my son who is so fair and proud and beautiful. He shall be High-king; he and he only is the son of my kinghood.

DUACH

That which is to be, will be.

CONCOBAR

[*Looking fixedly at him*

Shall not Cormac Conlingas be king after me?

DUACH

Have you forgotten, O king! Cormac mac Concobar is in arms against you. He and Fergus and a third of the Red Branch are with Queen Meave, whose armies gather to overwhelm you, to do to Ulla as the Great Queen has already done to Emain Macha, your proud city.

CONCOBAR

Cormac, my son, my son!

DUACH

These were the words he sent: "For that which you did upon Naysha and the sons of Usna, and for that shame which you brought upon Fergus mac Roy, and because of the beauty of Deirdrê which is no more in the world because of you . . . the Sword and Sorrow, Sorrow and the Sword!"

CONCOBAR

[*Angrily and impatiently*

I care not! I care not! He shall be king. Listen! Duach; I will send word to Cormac that I am weary of the kingship. He shall be Tanist, with all power. He shall be the Ard-Righ himself. He shall save Eiré. The prophecies of Cathba shall be set at nought. He shall be a great king. All Eiré shall call him king. All the Gaels shall call him Ard-Righ. His son's sons shall reign after him. Ireland shall be made one nation, because of this great king—Cormac, the son of Concobar, the son of Flachtna, kings and sons of kings!

DUACH

Beware, O Concobar, of the foam of dreams. It is only the great wave that will lift Eiré.

CONCOBAR

The great wave? Shall not that be the king?

DUACH

Through no king can Eiré become one nation and great, but only through the kinglihood of her sons and daughters. In the end, when all are royal of soul, Eiré shall be the first of the nations of the world.

CONCOBAR

[*Confusedly*

In the end? . . . In the end? Of what do you speak? Cormac shall be king, he and his sons after him. The blood of the gods is in Essa, his wife.

DUACH

[*Leaning forward, and staring into the king's face*

Essa? . . . Have you not heard? Essa is dead!

CONCOBAR

Essa is not dead. I saw her and Deirdrê and Dectera, my sister, and my mother Nessa, walking in the wood at the rising of the moon.

DUACH

[*Muttering*

Ay, that might well be. It is the hour of the dead.

CONCOBAR [*Sadly*

Is she dead, Essa, daughter of Etain the Wonderful?

DUACH

She is not dead, being of the Divine race. But her body lies at Rath Nessa, where in the dream of death she can look for ever upon the Hill of Tara.

CONCOBAR

Hopes fall about me as old leaves. [*A pause.*] Nevertheless, I will send to Cormac at the camp of Queen Meave. There shall be no more war. Cormac Conlingas shall be king.

DUACH

Cormac is not there. He is one of the nine hostages at the Dûn of Cònairey Mòr, the king of the Middle Province. Meave marches against him.

CONCOBAR

Fergus was king no more because of Nessa: I am king no more because of Deirdrê. She is not here, the beautiful Deirdrê. She is here

no more. I will go into the woods, and upon the hills. I am led by dreams and visions. Deirdrê, my dream and my désire!

DUACH

[*Aside*

The prophecy of the sting that was to sting to madness the King of the Ultonians! The gods see far!

CONCOBAR

[*Starting*

Who . . . what is that?

DUACH

I see nothing.

CONCOBAR

[*Pointing*

Look! . . . yonder . . . a white hound—a white hound, that moves through the wood! How swift and silent. . . see, his head is low . . . he is on the trail . . . is it Rumac?

[*An echo in the woods*

Rumac! Cormac! Cormac!

CONCOBAR

[*Moves backward a step*

What! Cormac! . . . Cormac? . . . my son Cormac!

DUACH

[*Staring into the dusk of the woods*

I seen no hound. . . . Where is the white hound?

CONCOBAR

Yonder . . . under the oaks . . . he goes swiftly to the place where he was born.

DUACH

Who?

CONCOBAR

Cormac. Cormac Conlingas, my son. Is this evil fallen upon me because of the death of Deirdrê? Is this evil come upon me out of the House of Usna?

DUACH

The House of Usna is in the dust.

CONCOBAR

[*Distraught, loudly chants*

The grey wind weeps, the grey wind weeps,
the grey wind weeps;
Dust on her breasts, dust in her eyes, the grey
wind weeps!

DUACH

The hound is gone.

CONCOBAR

[*Putting his finger on his lips*

Hush! do you hear the little children of the wind . . . rustling and laughing . . . the little children of the wind? Or are they the little white feet of those who come at dusk? Or are they the waves of the Moyle . . tears, tears, sighs, oh tears, tears, tears, of Deirdrê upon the dark waters of the Moyle!

DUACH

Deirdrê is in that far place where your hound of old is . . . where Rumac bays against a moon that does not set or wane.

CONCOBAR

[*Calling*

Rumac! Rumac!

ECHO

Coomac! Coomac!

CONCOBAR

Cormac, my beautiful son! Cormac! come! come!

[*A sound of a harp is heard. Both start*

CONCOBAR

Who comes?

DUACH

Someone comes through the wood.

CONCOBAR

[*Drawing his sword*

It is Naysha, son of Usna. Night after night I hear him come harping through the woods. Sometimes I see him, standing under an oak. He calls upon Deirdrê.

DUACH

It is Coel mac Coel, the old blind harper—he who loved Macha the great queen, and was blinded by her because that he loved overmuch. He alone wandered free out of Emain Macha when the beautiful city was laid waste. He is not alone; there are the young bards and minstrels with him. For the last three nights they have come in the darkness, and sung before the Royal Dûn the song which Coel made of Macha and her beautiful city. Hark! They sing now.

[*The noise of harps and tympans. From the wood comes the loud chanting voice of Coel:*

O, 'tis a good house, and a palace fair, the Dûn of Macha,
And happy with a great household is Macha there:

Druids she has, and bards, minstrels, harpers, knights;
Hosts of servants she has, and wonders beautiful and rare,
But nought so wonderful and sweet as her face, queenly fair,
O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

[*Choric voices in a loud, swelling chant:*
O Macha of the Ruddy Hair!

COEL *chants:*

The colour of her great Dûn is the shining whiteness of lime,
And within it are floors strewn with green rushes and couches white
Soft wondrous silks and blue gold-claspt mantles and furs
Are there, and jewelled golden cups for revelry by night:
Thy grianân of gold and glass is filled with sunshine-light,
O Macha, queen by day, queen by night!

[*Choric Voices:*
O Macha, queen by day, queen by night!

Beyond the green portals, and the brown and red thatch of wings
Striped orderly, the wings of innumerous stricken birds,

A wide shining floor reaches from wall to wall,
wondrously carven
Out of a sheet of silver, whereon are graven
swords
Intricately ablaze: mistress of many hoards
Art thou, Macha of few words!

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha of few words!

Fair indeed is thy couch, but fairer still is thy
throne,
A chair it is, all of a blaze of wonderful yellow
gold:
There thou sittest, and watchest the women
going to and fro,
Each in garments fair and with long locks
twisted fold in fold:
With the joy that is in thy house men would
not grow old,
O Macha, proud, austere, cold.

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha, proud, austere, cold.

Of a surety there is much joy to be had of
thee and thine,
There in the song-sweet sunlit bowers in that
place;
Wounded men might sink in sleep and be well
content

So to sleep, and to dream perchance, and
know no other grace
Than to wake and look betimes on thy proud
queenly face,
O Macha of the Proud Face!

[*Choric Voices:*

O Macha of the Proud Face!

And if there be any here who wish to know
more of this wonder,
Go, you will find all as I have shown, as I
have said:
From beneath its portico, thatched with wings
of birds blue and yellow,
Reaches a green lawn, where a fount is fed
From crystal and gems: of crystal and gold
each bed
In the house of Macha of the Ruddy
Head!

[*Choric Voices:*

In the house of Macha of the Ruddy
Head!

In that great house where Macha the queen
has her pleasaunce
There is everything in the whole world that a
man might desire,
God is my witness that if I say little it is for
this,

That I am grown faint with wonder, and can
no more admire,
But say this only, that I live and die in the
fire
Of thine eyes, O Macha, my desire,
With thine eyes of fire!

[*Choric Voices in a loud, swelling chant:*

But say this only, that we live and die in the
fire
Of thine eyes, O Macha, Dream, Desire,
With thine eyes of fire!

[*Choric Voices repeat their refrains, but fainter, and becoming more faint. Last vanishing sound of the harps and tympans*

CONCOBAR

Is Emain Macha as a dream that is no more?

DUACH

Emain Macha, the beautiful city, is as a dream that is no more.

[*A moan of wind*

CONCOBAR

Wind, wind, nothing but wind!

DUACH

Clouds cover the moon. Let us go, O king. To-night, dreams: the morrow waits, when dreams will be realities.

CONCOBAR

Dreams, dreams, nothing but dreams!

[*Slowly Concobar and Duach pass through the darkening gloom. The Dûn becomes more and more obscure. From the darkness to the right a single flute note, where Mainé lies*

MAINÉ

[*Chanting slowly, unseen*

Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

SCENE III

SCENE THE SAME.—*Ultonian Warriors have brought Cravetheen the Harper—a misshapen savage figure, held by two warriors—before the king, so that Concobar may decree what manner of death the man is to die, because of having murdered Cormac by setting fire to the Dûn, where he and Eilidh lay, and burning him and his love, and all that were within the Dûn.*

CONCOBAR

I have heard all. Let him go. What is death?

[*Cravetheen is released*

CRAVETHEEN

Have you no mercy, O king?

CONCOBAR

Harper, you have your life. Go!

CRAVETHEEN

Have you no mercy, O king?

CONCOBAR

What is your desire?

CRAVETHEEN

I have but one desire, Concobar, King of Ulla.

CONCOBAR

Speak.

CRAVETHEEN

It is that I may know death.

CONCOBAR

[*Rising, and smiling strangely*

Brother, I, too—I, too, have that one desire.

CRAVETHEEN

[*Confusedly*

You . . . the king. . . .

MAINÉ

[*Lying under an oak, makes a clear not on his reed-flute, and chants slowly, with wailing rise and fall*

Deirdrê is dead! Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

CRAVETHEEN

[*Muttering*

Ah, now I know! Now I know! [*Moving slowly towards the king.*] That cry is the cry of the House of Usna! The gods do not sleep, O king. That cry is the cry of the House of Usna!

CONCOBAR

[*With sudden fury, reaching out his arms as though cursing or abhorring the speaker*

Take him away! To death! . . . to death! Away with him!

CRAVETHEEN

[*Eagerly and triumphantly*

I am the voice of the House of Usna, O king!

CONCOBAR

[*Furiously*

Tie him to the saplings! Let him die the death of the oaks!

WARRIORS

[*Shouting*

To the Death-tree! To the Death-tree!

[*They seize Cravetheen and drag him away into the wood*

CONCOBAR

[*Staring about him confusedly*

Who spoke? [*Lower, in a hoarse whisper.*] Who spoke?

DUACH

O king, there is no evil done upon the world that the wind does not bring back to the feet of him who wrought it.

CONCOBAR

The wind! . . . The wind!

DUACH

O king, the gods abhor most the evil that is wrought unworthily by the great.

CONCOBAR

Who are the great . . . I have lost love, and my kinglihood, and my son, and all, all my hopes. Who are the great?

DUACH

O king, you have slain youth, and love, and beauty.

CONCOBAR

[*Wailingly*

Life. . . . Life. . . . Life for ever slays youth, and love, and beauty.

DUACH

Take not the brute law to be the divine law. O king, are prophecies idle ways of an idle wind? Long, long ago it was foretold that evil would come upon you and your house because of your uncontrolled desire, but what avail? Your ears were deaf.

CONCOBAR

Why do the gods pursue me? I am old, I am old.

DUACH

At the kindling of the light they look into the silent earth, and they behold the slain bodies of Naysha and Ailnê and Ardan, and a shade stands at their grave calling night and day—*I am the House of Usna!*

CONCOBAR

Druid, is there no evil done upon the world, is there no slaying of young men, is there no falling of heroic names into the dust, save what I have done?

DUACH

Because of your desire you slew your kinglihood.

CONCOBAR

My kinglihood?

DUACH

More terrible than the fate of Usna is the fall of royal honour. More terrible than the death of Naysha is the shame put upon those who blindly did your will. More terrible than the death of Deirdrê is the undoing of the great wonder and mystery of beauty. The gods call. . . . *"Concobar, Concobar, thy thirst shall be for shadows, and the rose of thy desire shall be dust within thy mouth!"*

CONCOBAR

[*Hopelessly*

It was because of love. . . . It was because of love.

DUACH

Yes, O king . . . love of thine own love.

[*Silence*

CONCOBAR

Evil can be undone.

DUACH

Where are the sons of Usna?

CONCOBAR

I tell you, Druid, evil can be undone. I repent me of my evil. . . . I repent me of my evil.

DUACH

Where are the sons of Usna? Where is the word of the king? Where is Deirdrê, the too great beauty of this evil time? Where is Emain Macha, the beautiful city? Where is the glory of the Red Branch? Where is Cormac, Cormac Conlingas, who was to be king? Where stands Eiré that was to be one nation?

CONCOBAR

[*In a hoarse whisper*

Have all these evils come upon me because I was a king and because I loved?

DUACH

Because you were a king and chose the unkingly way.

CONCOBAR

[*Wailingly*

Good blooms like a flower that has its day: evil like a weed that endures, and grows and grows and grows.

DUACH

But the evil that is done of kings shall cover the whole land.

CONCOBAR

[*Starting, and furiously*

Enough! Enough, Druid! I have heard enough. I am the king. [*Raising his sword, and looking towards the Warriors, shouts.*] Ultonians, awake! I am the king. I am the Red Branch. On the morrow we march. I shall lead you, with Conaill Carna and with Cuchulain. The armies of Queen Meave shall be scattered like dry leaves. Fear not the gods! The gods follow the victorious sword! Before the new moon all the gods of the Gael will be on our side! *The Red Branch! The Red Branch!*

WARRIORS

[*Clashing swords and spears*
The Red Branch! The Red Branch!

CONCOBAR

Up with the Sunburst! Up with the banner of the Sunburst!

WARRIORS

The Sunburst! The Sunburst!

CONCOBAR

[*Triumphantly*
The gods are with us! (*Lower, and turning to Duach, exultantly.*) The gods are with us. Druid, it is the will of man that compels the gods, not the gods who compel man.

DUACH

[*After a momentary pause, and laying his hand on the king's arm*
The gods *are* the will of man. For good and for evil the gods *are* the will of man.

CONCOBAR

Stand back, Druid. I am weary of your subtleties. (*Shouts.*) Warriors, go! On the morrow I shall lead you—I, and Conaill the Victorious, and Cuchulain the greatest champion of Eiré!

WARRIORS

[*Go shouting, and after they have gone their voices are heard repeating the acclaim*

Concobar! Concobar! Conaill Carna! Cuchulain! Cuchulain!

CONCOBAR

[*Looking sombrely at Duach*

Druid, go! I would be alone.

DUACH

I go. But truly, yea, truly, O king, you shall be alone from this hour.

CONCOBAR

[*Scornfully*

Enough. I am the king. I have great dreams. The gods are with me. They have forgotten, for they do not long remember the dead!

DUACH

[*Meaningly, as he moves slowly away*

The gods neither sleep nor do they forget.

[*A long pause. Silence*

CONCOBAR

[*Alone, exultantly*

I am the king. I have great dreams.

[*A wailing voice from the wood. The king starts, raising his sword.*

CONCOBAR

Who is that? . . . what is that?

CRAVETHEEN

[*Unseen, on the Death-tree*

It is I, Cravetheen, in my hour of death.

[*Silence. The king stands listening. Again a long wailing cry.*

CRAVETHEEN

The gods do not sleep, O king! . . . Farewell.

[*Slowly Concobar lowers his sword. It falls with a crash to the ground. He stands as though spell-bound.*

CONCOBAR

[*In an awed whispering voice*
It is the cry of the House of Usna!
[*Silence. Slowly the king lifts his hand to his face, and bows his head.*

From the wood the boy Mainé breathes three poignant notes on his reed-flute, and chants slowly with long rise and fall.

Deirdrê is dead. Deirdrê the Beautiful is dead, is dead!

THE END

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

By Mrs. William Sharp

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Into this book are gathered the poems—with a few exceptions—and the two finished dramas written by William Sharp under the pseudonym of "Fiona Macleod." One or two early lyrics in the present volume were not reprinted in the posthumous English Edition of *From the Hills of Dream*, because that selection was made, but not arranged, by the author for a second and enlarged but not necessarily final edition of the verse of "Fiona Macleod."

I have adhered as much as possible to a chronological sequence. The poems grouped in the sections *From the Hills of Dream*, and those marked elsewhere with *, were written between 1893–1896 and published under that title in 1896 by Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, Edinburgh. In 1901 a selection from that volume, together with poems written between 1896–1900, was published under the original title by Mr. Thomas B. Mosher, in America. Those later poems are, in this Collected Edition, grouped together in "Foam of the Past" and "Through the Ivory Gate;" and those written subsequently, 1900–1905, form the sections "The Dirge of the Four Cities" (with the exception of Murias which was previously published as "Requiem") and "The Hour of Beauty;" and form part of the posthumous English Edition of *From the Hills of Dream* issued by Mr. Heinemann in 1907. The subsequent poems, 1900–1905, together

with those herein marked with an O, were published under the title of *The Hour of Beauty*, by Mr. Mosher, in 1907.

I wish to express my indebtedness to Mr. Alfred Noyes for permission to reprint at the end of the volume, his Sonnet "To Fiona MacLeod," which appeared first in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1906, and in 1907 as preface to the American Edition of the tale entitled "The Wayfarer" (from *The Winged Destiny*) published by Mr. Mosher.

The two poetic dramas "The House of Usna" and "The Immortal Hour," were intended by the author to form part of a series of plays to be published collectively as *The Theatre of the Soul*, or *The Psychic Drama*. The names of these unwritten, though mentally cartooned poetic plays, by "Fiona Macleod," were "Nial the Soulless," "The King of Ys," "Drostan and Yssul," "The Veiled Avenger," "The Book of Dalua."

The two completed poetic plays appeared originally in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1900. In the original manuscript the former bears the title "The King of Ireland's Son," though preference was given later to "The House of Usna," and under this name the play was produced by The Stage Society and acted at the Globe Theatre on the 29th of April, 1900, under William Sharp's direct supervision—when one or two only of the audience, other than the occupants of our stage box, knew that the author, "Fiona Macleod" witnessed the performance in the person of the President of The Stage Society. "The House of Usna" has not hitherto been published in book form in Great Britain, but an American edition was brought out in America by Mr. Mosher, in 1903.

Bibliographical Note

"The Immortal Hour" was altered and rewritten several times. I cannot recall when it was begun, but my husband read it to me at Ballycastle, Ireland, in the summer of 1899. The original form, as printed in *The Fortnightly Review*, lacked the present opening, and finished with a short epilogue; this forepart was specially revised and printed separately as "Dalua," and thus described by the author: "A fragment, as 'The Immortal Hour' itself is, of the as yet unwritten *Book of Dalua* or *Book of the Dark Fool*, of whose fulfilment the author sometimes dreams."

"The Immortal Hour" was published posthumously in America by Mr. Mosher, in 1907, and in England by Mr. T. N. Foulis in 1908.

A word concerning the illustrations. The suggestive landscapes in volumes II, III, IV, V, VI—reproduced from drawings by the Highland painter and etcher, Mr. D. Y. Cameron—are glimpses of some of those Isles of the West that form the setting to so many of the "Fiona Macleod" Tales: Arran, with its picturesque hills; Iona, the Isle of Dreams, with its "Sundown Shores"; the Treshnish Isles, that lie further westward in the Atlantic; and Skye, the Isle of Mists, that fronts the stormy northern seas.

The portraits in volumes I and VII are from photographs of William Sharp that date to the period of the "Fiona Macleod" writings. That in volume I was taken in Dublin, in 1896, two years after the appearance of *Pharais;* that in volume VII was taken in Sicily, at Il Castello di Maniace, by the Duke of Bronte, in 1903, a few months prior to the publication of *The Winged Destiny.*

ELIZABETH A. SHARP.

FIONA MACLEOD

A spirit listened to the whispering grass,
That shimmered with wet tints of human tears,
And like a wandering wind the lonely years
Dried them; the spirit heard that low wind pass,
And cried THERE IS NO TIME: TIME NEVER WAS!
Then beat it down and flew beyond the spheres,
To where the immortal Face of Beauty wears
That smile which earth sees darkly, as in a glass.

And now where'er the dews at nightfall glisten,
Where'er the mountain-winds are breathing low,
Where'er the seas creep glimmering to the shore,
Some wanderer shall pause awhile and listen,
And see i' the darkling glass a tenderer glow
Whence that bright spirit whispers evermore.

ALFRED NOYES.

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